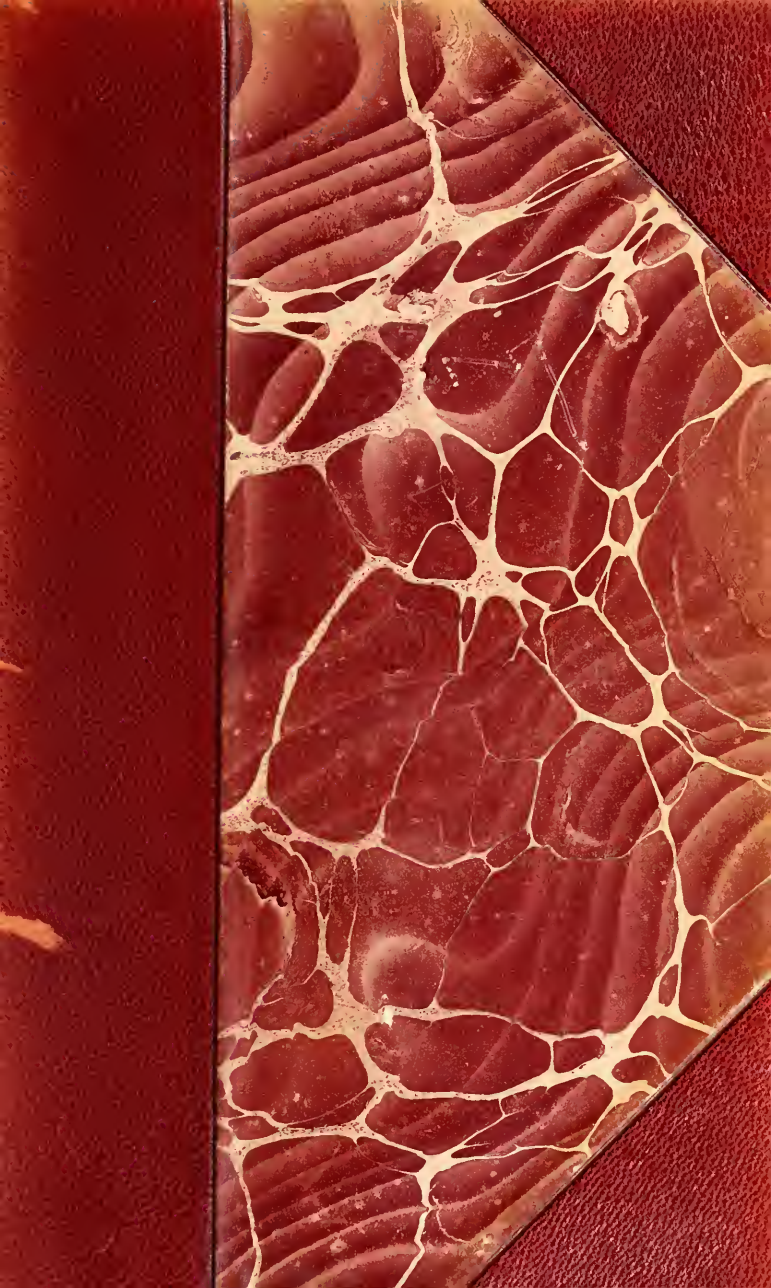
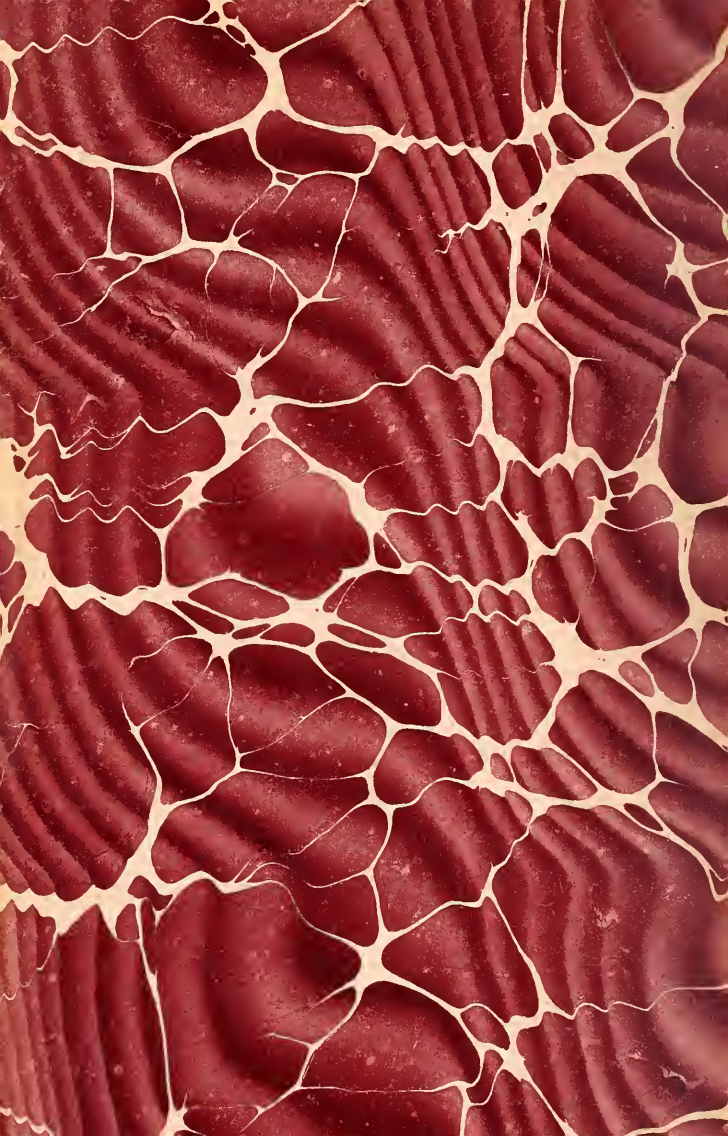








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WILLIAM HARRISON
AINSWORTH
VOLUME XIV

JACK SHEPPARD

VOLUME II



WINDSOR EDITION

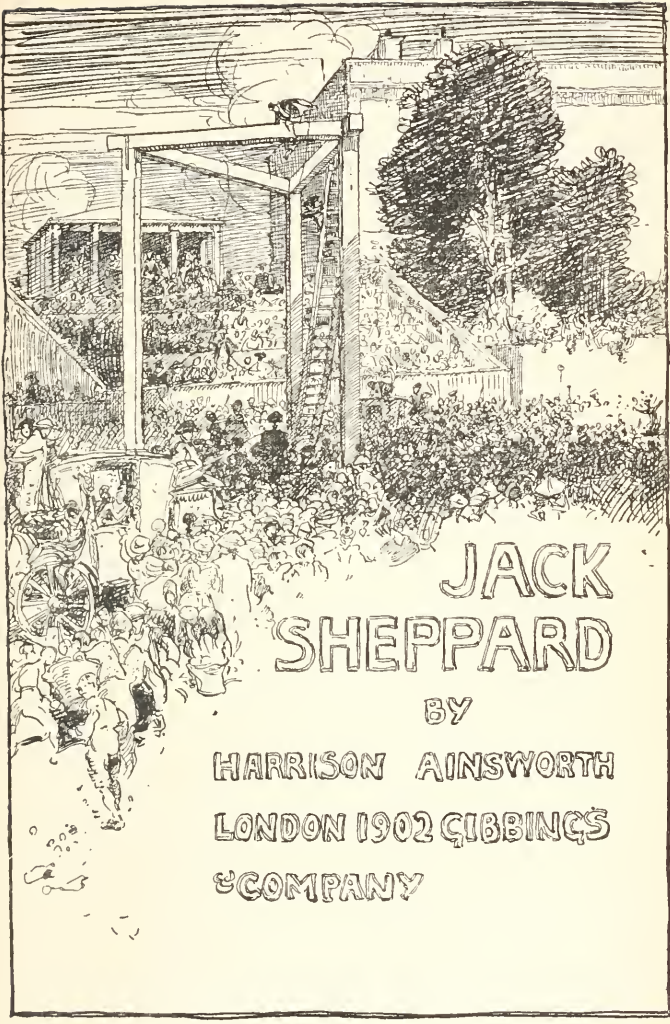
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*Let Soup be in company with Ed-
ward B. and fun from Clerkenwell
Down.*





JACK SHEPPARD

BY

HARRISON AINSWORTH

LONDON 1902 GIBBINGS

& COMPANY

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JACK SHEPPARD

EPOCH THE THIRD

1724

THE PRISON-BREAKER

I

The Return.

NEARLY nine years after the events last recorded, and about the middle of May 1724, a young man of remarkably prepossessing appearance took his way, one afternoon, along Wych Street; and from the curiosity with which he regarded the houses on the left of the road, seemed to be in search of some particular habitation. The age of this individual could not be more than twenty-one; his figure was tall, robust, and gracefully proportioned; and his clear grey eye and open countenance bespoke a frank, generous, and resolute nature. His features were regular, and finely formed; his complexion bright and blooming—a little shaded, however, by travel and exposure to the sun; and, with a praiseworthy contempt for the universal and preposterous fashion then prevailing, of substituting a peruke for the natural covering of the head, he allowed his own dark-brown hair to fall over his shoulders in ringlets as luxuriant as those that distinguished the

court-gallant in Charles the Second's days—a fashion which we do not despair of seeing revived in our own days. He wore a French military undress of the period, with high jack-boots, and a laced hat ; and, though his attire indicated no particular rank, he had completely the air of a person of distinction. Such was the effect produced upon the passengers by his good looks and manly deportment, that few—especially of the gentler and more susceptible sex—failed to turn round and bestow a second glance upon the handsome stranger. Unconscious of the interest he excited, and entirely occupied by his own thoughts—which, if his bosom could have been examined, would have been found composed of mingled hopes and fears—the young man walked on till he came to an old house, with great projecting bay windows on the first floor, and situated as nearly as possible at the back of Saint Clement's Church. Here he halted ; and looking upwards, read, at the foot of an immense sign-board, displaying a gaudily-painted angel with expanded pinions and an olive-branch, not the name he expected to find, but that of

WILLIAM KNEEBONE, WOOLLEN-DRAPER.

Tears started to the young man's eyes on beholding the change, and it was with difficulty he could command himself sufficiently to make the inquiries he desired to do respecting the former owner of the house. As he entered the shop, a tall portly personage advanced to meet him, whom he at once recognised as the present proprietor. Mr. Kneebone was attired in the extremity of the mode. A full-curved wig descended half-way down his back and shoulders ; a neckcloth of "right Mechlin" was twisted round his throat so tightly as almost to deprive him of breath, and threaten him with apoplexy ; he had lace, also, at his wrists and bosom ; gold clocks to his hose, and red heels to his

shoes. A stiff, formally cut coat of cinnamon-coloured cloth, with rows of plate buttons, each of the size of a crown piece, on the sleeves, pockets, and skirts, reached the middle of his legs ; and his costume was completed by the silver-hilted sword at his side, and the laced hat under his left arm. Bowing to the stranger, the woollen-draper very politely requested to know his business.

"I'm almost afraid to state it," faltered the other ; "but, may I ask whether Mr. Wood, the carpenter, who formerly resided here, is still living?"

"If you feel any anxiety on his account, sir, I'm happy to be able to relieve it," answered Kneebone readily. "My good friend, Owen Wood—Heaven preserve him!—*is* still living ; and, for a man who'll never see sixty again, he's in excellent preservation, I assure you."

"You delight me with the intelligence," said the stranger, entirely recovering his cheerfulness of look. "I began to fear, from his having quitted the old place, that some misfortune must have befallen him."

"Quite the contrary," rejoined the woollen-draper, laughing good-humouredly. "Everything has prospered with him in an extraordinary manner. His business has thriven: legacies have unexpectedly dropped into his lap ; and, to crown all, he has made a large fortune by a lucky speculation in South-Sea stock—made it, too, where so many others have lost fortunes, your humble servant amongst the number—ha ! ha ! In a word, sir, Mr. Wood is now in very affluent circumstances. He stuck to the shop as long as it was necessary, and longer, in my opinion. When he left these premises, three years ago, I took them from him ; or rather—to deal frankly with you—he placed me in them rent-free ; for I'm not ashamed to confess it, I've had losses, and heavy ones ; and, if it hadn't been for him, I don't know where I should have been. Mr. Wood, sir," he added, with much emotion,

"is one of the best of men, and would be the happiest, were it not that——" And he hesitated.

"Well, sir?" cried the other eagerly.

"His wife is still living," returned Kneebone dryly.

"I understand," replied the stranger, unable to repress a smile. "But it strikes me I've heard that Mrs. Wood was once a favourite of yours."

"So she was," replied the woollen-draper, helping himself to an enormous pinch of snuff, with the air of a man who does not dislike to be rallied about his gallantry—"so she was. But those days are over—quite over. Since her husband has laid me under such a weight of obligation, I couldn't, in honour, continue—hem!" And he took another explanatory pinch. "Added to which, she is neither so young as she was, nor is her temper by any means improved—hem!"

"Say no more on the subject, sir," observed the stranger gravely; "but let us turn to a more agreeable one—her daughter."

"That is a far more agreeable one, I must confess," returned Kneebone with a self-sufficient smirk.

The stranger looked at him, as if strongly disposed to chastise his impertinence.

"Is she married?" he asked, after a brief pause.

"Married!—no—no," replied the woollen-draper. "Winifred Wood will never marry, unless the grave can give up its dead. When a mere child, she fixed her affections upon a youth named Thames Darrell, whom her father brought up, and who perished, it is supposed, about nine years ago; and she has determined to remain faithful to his memory."

"You astonish me," said the stranger in a voice full of emotion.

"Why, it *is* astonishing, certainly," remarked Kneebone, "to find any woman constant—especially to a girlish attachment; but such is the case. She has had offers innumerable; for where wealth and beauty are

combined, as in her instance, suitors are seldom wanting. But she was not to be tempted."

"She is a matchless creature!" exclaimed the young man.

"So I think," replied Kneebone, again applying to the snuff-box, and by that means escaping the angry glance levelled at him by his companion.

"I have one inquiry more to make of you, sir," said the stranger, as soon as he had conquered his displeasure, "and I will then trouble you no further. You spoke just now of a youth whom Mr. Wood brought up. As far as I recollect, there were two. What has become of the other?"

"Why, surely, you don't mean Jack Sheppard?" cried the woollen-draper in surprise.

"That was the lad's name," returned the stranger.

"I guessed from your dress and manner, sir, that you must have been long absent from your own country," said Kneebone; "and now I'm convinced of it, or you wouldn't have asked that question. Jack Sheppard is the talk and terror of the whole town. The ladies can't sleep in their beds for him; and as to the men, they daren't go to bed at all. He's the most daring and expert housebreaker that ever used a crow-bar. He laughs at locks and bolts; and the more carefully you guard your premises from him, the more likely are you to insure an attack. His exploits and escapes are in everybody's mouth. He has been lodged in every roundhouse in the metropolis, and has broken out of them all, and boasts that no prison can hold him. We shall see. His skill has not been tried. At present he is under the protection of Jonathan Wild."

"Does that villain still maintain his power?" asked the stranger sternly.

"He does," replied Kneebone, "and, what is more surprising, it seems to increase. Jonathan completely

baffles and derides the end of justice. It is useless to contend with him, even with right on your side. Some years ago, in 1715, just before the Rebellion, I was rash enough to league myself with the Jacobite party, and, by Wild's machinations got clapped into Newgate, whence I was glad to escape with my head upon my shoulders. I charged the thief-taker, as was the fact, with having robbed me, by means of the lad Sheppard, whom he instigated to the deed, of the very pocket-book he produced in evidence against me; but it was of no avail—I couldn't obtain a hearing. Mr. Wood fared still worse. Bribed by a certain Sir Rowland Trenchard, Jonathan kidnapped the carpenter's adopted son, Thames Darrell, and placed him in the hands of a Dutch skipper, with orders to throw him overboard when he got out to sea; and though this was proved as clear as day, the rascal managed matters so adroitly, and gave such a different complexion to the whole affair, that he came off with flying colours. One reason perhaps of his success in this case might be, that having arrested his associate in the dark transaction, Sir Rowland Trenchard, on a charge of high treason, he was favoured by Walpole, who found his account in retaining such an agent. Be this as it may, Jonathan remained the victor; and shortly afterwards—at the price of a third of his estate, it was whispered—he procured Trenchard's liberation from confinement." At the mention of the latter occurrence, a dark cloud gathered upon the stranger's brow.

"Do you know anything further of Sir Rowland?" he asked.

"Nothing more than this," answered Kneebone—"that after the failure of his projects, and the downfall of his party, he retired to his seat, Ashton Hall, near Manchester, and has remained there ever since, entirely secluded from the world."

The stranger was for a moment lost in reflection.

"And now, sir," he said, preparing to take his departure, "will you add to the obligation already conferred, by informing me where I can meet with Mr. Wood?"

"With pleasure," replied the woollen-draper. "He lives at Dollis Hill, a beautiful spot near Willesden, about four or five miles from town, where he has taken a farm. If you ride out there—and the place is well worth a visit, for the magnificent view it commands of some of the finest country in the neighbourhood of London—you are certain to meet with him. I saw him yesterday, and he told me he shouldn't stir from home for a week to come. He called here on his way back, after he had been to Bedlam to visit poor Mrs. Sheppard."

"Jack's mother!" exclaimed the young man. "Gracious Heaven!—is she the inmate of a mad-house?"

"She is, sir," answered the woollen-draper sadly, "driven there by her son's misconduct. Alas! that the punishment of his offences should fall on her head. Poor soul! she nearly died when she heard he had robbed his master; and it might have been well if she had done so, for she never afterwards recovered her reason. She rambles continually about Jack and her husband, and that wretch Jonathan, to whom, as far as can be gathered from her wild ravings, she attributes all her misery. I pity her from the bottom of my heart. But in the midst of all her affliction she has found a steady friend in Mr. Wood, who looks after her comforts and visits her constantly. Indeed, I've heard him say that, but for his wife, he would shelter her under his own roof. That, sir, is what I call being a good Samaritan."

The stranger said nothing, but hastily brushed away a tear. Perceiving he was about to take leave, Knee-bone ventured to ask whom he had had the honour of

addressing. Before the question could be answered, a side-door was opened, and a very handsome woman of Amazonian proportions presented herself, and marched familiarly up to Mr. Kneebone. She was extremely showily dressed, and her large hooped petticoat gave additional effect to her lofty stature. As soon as she noticed the stranger, she honoured him with an extremely impudent stare, and scarcely endeavoured to disguise the admiration with which his good looks impressed her.

"Don't you perceive, my dear Mrs. Maggot, that I'm engaged?" said Kneebone, a little disconcerted.

"Who've you got with you?" demanded the Amazon boldly.

"The gentleman is a stranger to me, Poll," replied the woollen-draper with increased embarrassment. "I don't know his name." And he looked at the moment as if he had lost all desire to know it.

"Well, he's a pretty fellow, at all events," observed Mrs. Maggot, eyeing him from head to heel with evident satisfaction—"a devilish pretty fellow!"

"Upon my word, Poll," said Kneebone, becoming very red, "you might have a little more delicacy than to tell him so before my face."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Maggot, drawing up her fine figure to its full height; "because I condescend to live with you am I never to look at another man—especially at one so much to my taste as this? Don't think it!"

"You had better retire, madam," said the woollen-draper sharply, "if you can't conduct yourself with more propriety."

"Order those who choose to obey you," rejoined the lady scornfully. "Though you lorded it over that fond fool Mrs. Wood, you shan't lord it over me, I can promise you. That for you!" And she snapped her fingers in his face.

"Zounds!" cried Kneebone furiously. "Go to your own room, woman, directly, or I'll make you!"

"Make me!" echoed Mrs. Maggot, bursting into a loud contemptuous laugh. "Try!"

Enraged at the assurance of his mistress, the woollen-draper endeavoured to carry his threat into execution; but all his efforts to remove her were unavailing. At length, after he had given up the point from sheer exhaustion, the Amazon seized him by the throat and pushed him backwards with such force that he rolled over the counter.

"There!" she cried, laughing, "that'll teach you to lay hands upon me again. You should remember before you try your strength against mine, that when I rescued you from the watch, and you induced me to come and live with you, I beat off four men, any of whom was a match for you—ha! ha!"

"My dear Poll!" said Kneebone, picking himself up, "I entreat you to moderate yourself."

"Entreat a fiddlestick!" retorted Mrs. Maggot: "I'm tired of you, and will go back to my old lover Jack Sheppard. He's worth a dozen of you. Or if this good-looking young fellow will only say the word, I'll go with him."

"You may go, and welcome, madam!" rejoined Kneebone spitefully. "But I should think, after the specimen you've just given of your amiable disposition, no person would be likely to saddle himself with such an incumbrance."

"What say you, sir?" said the Amazon, with an engaging leer at the stranger. "*You* will find me tractable enough; and, with *me* by your side, you need fear neither constable nor watchman. I've delivered Jack Sheppard from many an assault. I can wield a quarter-staff as well as a prize-fighter, and have beaten Figg himself at the broadsword. Will you take me?"

However tempting Mrs. Maggot's offer may appear,

the young man thought fit to decline it, and, after a few words of well-merited compliment on her extraordinary prowess, and renewed thanks to Mr. Kneebone, he took his departure.

“Good-bye!” cried Mrs. Maggot, kissing her hand to him. “I’ll find you out. And now,” she added, glancing contemptuously at the woollen-draper, “I’ll go to Jack Sheppard.”

“You shall first go to Bridewell, you jade!” rejoined Kneebone. “Here, Tom,” he added, calling to a shopboy, “run and fetch a constable.”

“He had better bring half-a-dozen,” said the Amazon, taking up a cloth-yard wand, and quietly seating herself; “one won’t do.”

On leaving Mr. Kneebone’s house, the young man hastened to an hotel in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, where, having procured a horse, he shaped his course towards the west-end of the town. Urging his steed along Oxford Road—as that great approach to the metropolis was then termed—he soon passed Marylebone Lane, beyond which, with the exception of a few scattered houses, the country was completely open on the right, and laid out in pleasant fields and gardens; nor did he draw in the rein until he arrived at Tyburn Gate, where, before he turned off upon the Edgeware Road, he halted for a moment, to glance at the place of execution. This “fatal retreat for the unfortunate brave” was marked by a low wooden railing, within which stood the triple tree. Opposite the gallows was an open gallery, or scaffolding, like the stand at a race-course, which, on state occasions, was crowded with spectators. Without the enclosure were reared several lofty gibbets, with their ghastly burdens.

Altogether, it was a hideous and revolting sight. Influenced, probably, by what he had heard from Mr. Kneebone, respecting the lawless career of Jack Shep-

pard, and struck with the probable fate that awaited him, the young man, as he contemplated this scene, fell into a gloomy reverie. While he was thus musing, two horsemen rode past him; and, proceeding to a little distance, stopped likewise. One of them was a stout, square-built man, with a singularly swarthy complexion, and harsh, forbidding features. He was well mounted, as was his companion; and had pistols in his holsters, and a hanger at his girdle. The other individual, who was a little in advance, was concealed from the stranger's view. Presently, however, a sudden movement occurred, and disclosed his features, which were those of a young man of nearly his own age. The dress of this person was excessively showy, and consisted of a scarlet riding-habit, lined and faced with blue, and bedizened with broad gold lace, a green silk-knit waistcoat, embroidered with silver, and decorated with a deep fringe, together with a hat tricked out in the same gaudy style. His figure was slight, but well built; and in stature he did not exceed five feet four. His complexion was pale, and there was something sinister in the expression of his large black eyes. His head was small and bullet-shaped, and he did not wear a wig, but had his sleek black hair cut off closely round his temples. A mutual recognition took place at the same instant between the stranger and this individual. Both started. The latter seemed inclined to advance and address the former; but suddenly changing his mind, he shouted to his companion in tones familiar to the stranger's ear, and striking spurs into his steed, dashed off at full speed along the Edgeware Road. Impelled by a feeling, into which we shall not pause to inquire, the stranger started after them; but they were better mounted, and soon distanced him. Remarking that they struck off at a turning on the left, he took the same road, and soon found himself on Paddington Green. A row of

magnificent, and even then venerable, elms threw their broad arms over this pleasant spot. From a man, who was standing beneath the shade of one of those noble trees, information was obtained that the horsemen had ridden along the Harrow Road. With a faint view of overtaking them, the pursuer urged his steed to a quicker pace. Arrived at Westbourne Green, then nothing more than a common covered with gorse and furze-bushes, and boasting only a couple of cottages and an alehouse—he perceived through the hedges the objects of his search slowly ascending the gentle hill that rises from Kensal Green.

By the time he had reached the summit of this hill, he had lost all trace of them; and the ardour of the chase having in some measure subsided, he began to reproach himself for his folly in having wandered—as he conceived—so far out of his course. Before retracing his steps, however, he allowed his gaze to range over the vast and beautiful prospect spread out beneath him, which is now hidden from the traveller's view by the high walls of the General Cemetery, and can consequently only be commanded from the interior of that attractive place of burial—and which, before it was intersected by canals and railroads, and portioned out into hippodromes, was exquisite indeed. After feasting his eye upon this superb panorama, he was about to return, when he ascertained from a farmer that his nearest road to Willesden would be down a lane a little farther on, to the right. Following this direction he opened a gate, and struck into one of the most beautiful green lanes imaginable, which, after various windings, conducted him into a more frequented road, and eventually brought him to the place he sought.

Glancing at the finger-post over the gate, which has been described as situated at the outskirts of the village, and seeing no direction to Dollis Hill, he made fresh inquiries as to where it lay, from an elderly man who

was standing with another countryman near the little prison.

"Whose house do you want, master?" said the man, touching his hat.

"Mr. Wood's," was the reply.

"There is Dollis Hill," said the man, pointing to a well-wooded eminence about a mile distant; "and there," he added, indicating the roof of a house just visible above a grove of trees, "is Mr. Wood's. If you ride past the church and mount the hill, you'll come to Neasdon, and then you'll not have above half a mile to go."

The young man thanked his informant, and was about to follow his instructions, when the other called after him—

"I say, master, did you ever hear tell of Mr. Wood's famous 'prentice?"

"What apprentice?" asked the stranger, in surprise.

"Why, Jack Sheppard, the notorious housebreaker—him as has robbed half Lunnun, to be sure. You must know, sir, when he was a lad, the day after he broke into his master's house in Wych Street, he picked a gentleman's pocket in our church during sarvice-time—that he did, the heathen. The gentleman caught him i' th' fact, and we shut him up for safety i' that pris'n. But," said the fellow, with a laugh, "he soon contrived to make his way out on it, though. Ever since he's become so famous, the folks about here ha' christened it Jack Sheppard's Cage. His mother used to live i' this village, just down yonder; but when her son took to bad ways, she went distracted—and now she's i' Bedlam, I've heerd."

"I tell'e what, John Dump," said the other fellow, who had hitherto preserved silence, "I don't know whether you talkin' o' Jack Sheppard has put him into my head or not; but I once had him pointed out to me, and if that *were* him as I seed then,

he's just now ridden past us, and put up at the Six Bells."

"The deuce he has," cried Dump. "If you were sure o' that we might seize him, and get the reward for his apprehension."

"That 'ud be no such easy matter," replied the countryman. "Jack's a desperate fellow, and is always well armed; besides, he has a comrade with him. But I'll tell'e what we *might* do——"

The young man heard no more. Taking the direction pointed out, he rode off. As he passed the Six Bells, he noticed the steeds of the two horsemen at the door; and glancing into the house, perceived the younger of the two in the passage. The latter no sooner beheld him than he dashed hastily into an adjoining room. After debating with himself whether he should further seek an interview, which, though now in his power, was so sedulously shunned by the other party, he decided in the negative; and contented himself with writing upon a slip of paper the hasty words—"You are known by the villagers—be upon your guard,"—he gave it to the ostler, with instructions to deliver it instantly to the owner of the horse he pointed out, and pursued his course.

Passing the old rectory, and still older church, with its reverend screen of trees, and slowly ascending a hill-side, from whence he obtained enchanting peeps of the spire and college of Harrow, he reached the cluster of well-built houses which constitute the village of Neasdon. From this spot a road, more resembling the drive through a park than a public thoroughfare, led him gradually to the brow of Dollis Hill. It was a serene and charming evening, and twilight was gently stealing over the face of the country. Bordered by fine timber, the road occasionally offered glimpses of a lovely valley, until a wider opening gave a full view of a delightful and varied prospect. On the left

lay the heights of Hampstead, studded with villas, while farther off a hazy cloud marked the position of the metropolis. The stranger concluded he could not be far from his destination, and a turn in the road showed him the house.

Beneath two tall elms, whose boughs completely overshadowed the roof, stood Mr. Wood's dwelling—a plain, substantial, commodious farmhouse. On a bench at the foot of the trees, with a pipe in his mouth, and a tankard by his side, sat the worthy carpenter, looking the picture of good-heartedness and benevolence. The progress of time was marked in Mr. Wood by increased corpulence and decreased powers of vision—by deeper wrinkles and higher shoulders, by scantier breath, and a fuller habit. Still he looked hale and hearty, and the country life he led had imparted a ruddier glow to his cheek. Around him were all the evidences of plenty. A world of haystacks, beanstacks, and straw-ricks flanked the granges adjoining his habitation; the yard was crowded with poultry, pigeons were feeding at his feet, cattle were being driven towards the stall, horses led to the stable, a large mastiff was rattling his chain, and stalking majestically in front of his kennel, while a number of farming men were passing and repassing about their various occupations. At the back of the house, on a bank, rose an old-fashioned terrace-garden, full of apple-trees and other fruit-trees in blossom, and lively with the delicious verdure of early spring.

Hearing the approach of the rider, Mr. Wood turned to look at him. It was now getting dusk, and he could only imperfectly distinguish the features and figure of the stranger.

"I need not ask whether this is Mr. Wood," said the latter, "since I find him at his own gate."

"You are right, sir," said the worthy carpenter, rising. "I am Owen Wood, at your service."

"You do not remember me, I dare say?" observed the stranger.

"I can't say I do," replied Wood. "Your voice seems familiar to me—and—but I'm getting a little deaf—and my eyes don't serve me quite so well as they used to do, especially by this light."

"Never mind," returned the stranger, dismounting; "you'll recollect me by-and-by, I've no doubt. I bring you tidings of an old friend."

"Then you are heartily welcome, sir, whoever you are. Pray walk in. Here, Jem, take the gentleman's horse to the stable—see him dressed and fed directly. Now, sir, will you please to follow me?"

Mr. Wood then led the way up a rather high, and, according to modern notions, incommodious flight of steps, and introduced his guest to a neat parlour, the windows of which were darkened by pots of flowers and creepers. There was no light in the room; but notwithstanding this, the young man did not fail to detect the buxom figure of Mrs. Wood, now more buxom and more gorgeously arrayed than ever—as well as a young and beautiful female, in whom he was at no loss to recognise the carpenter's daughter.

Winifred Wood was now in her twentieth year. Her features were still slightly marked by the disorder alluded to in the description of her as a child—but that was the only drawback to her beauty. Their expression was so amiable, that it would have redeemed a countenance a thousand times plainer than hers. Her figure was perfect, tall, graceful, rounded—and then she had deep liquid blue eyes, that rivalled the stars in lustre. On the stranger's appearance, she was seated near the window, busily occupied with her needle.

"My wife and daughter, sir," said the carpenter, introducing them to his guest.

Mrs. Wood, whose admiration for masculine beauty was by no means abated, glanced at the well-proportioned figure of the young man, and made him a very civil salutation. Winifred's reception was kind, but more distant, and after the slight ceremonial she resumed her occupation.

"This gentleman brings us tidings of an old friend, my dear," said the carpenter.

"Ay, indeed! And who may that be?" inquired his wife.

"One whom you may perhaps have forgotten," replied the stranger, "but who can never forget the kindness he experienced at your hands, or at those of your excellent husband."

At the sound of his voice every vestige of colour fled from Winifred's cheeks, and the work upon which she was engaged fell from her hand.

"I have a token to deliver to you," continued the stranger, addressing her.

"To me?" gasped Winifred.

"This locket," he said, taking a little ornament attached to a black riband from his breast, and giving it to her; "do you remember it?"

"I do—I do!" cried Winifred.

"What's all this?" exclaimed Wood, in amazement.

"Do you not know me, father?" said the young man, advancing towards him, and warmly grasping his hand. "Have nine years so changed me, that there is no trace left of your adopted son?"

"God bless me!" ejaculated the carpenter, rubbing his eyes, "can—can it be?"

"Surely," screamed Mrs. Wood, joining the group, "it isn't Thames Darrell come to life again?"

"It is—it is," cried Winifred, rushing towards him, and flinging her arms round his neck—"it is my dear—dear brother."

“Well, this is what I never expected to see,” said the carpenter, wiping his eyes; “I hope I’m not dreaming. Thames, my dear boy, as soon as Winny has done with you, let me embrace you.”

“My turn comes before yours, sir,” interposed his better half. “Come to my arms, Thames. Oh dear! Oh dear!”

To repeat the questions and congratulations which now ensued, or describe the extravagant joy of the carpenter, who, after he had hugged his adopted son to his breast with such warmth as to almost squeeze the breath from his body, capered around the room, threw his wig into the empty fire-grate, and committed various other fantastic actions, in order to get rid of his superfluous satisfaction—to describe the scarcely less extravagant raptures of his spouse, or the more subdued, but not less heartfelt delight of Winifred, would be a needless task, as it must occur to every one’s imagination. Supper was quickly served; the oldest bottle of wine was brought from the cellar; the strongest barrel of ale was tapped; but not one of the party could eat or drink—their hearts were too full.

Thames sat with Winifred’s hand clasped in his own, and commenced a recital of his adventures, which may be briefly told. Carried out to sea by Van Galgebrok and thrown overboard, while struggling with the waves he had been picked up by a French fishing-boat and carried to Ostend. After encountering various hardships and privations for a long time, during which he had no means of communicating with England, he at length found his way to Paris, where he was taken notice of by Cardinal Dubois, who employed him as one of his secretaries, and subsequently advanced him to the service of Philip of Orleans, from whom he received a commission. On the death of his royal patron he resolved to return to his own country; and,

after various delays, which had postponed it to the present time, he had succeeded in accomplishing his object.

Winifred listened to his narration with the profoundest attention ; and, when it concluded, her tearful eye and throbbing bosom told how deeply her feelings had been interested. The discourse then turned to Darrell's old playmate, Jack Sheppard ; and Mr. Wood, in deploring his wild career, adverted to the melancholy condition to which it had reduced his mother.

"For my part, it's only what I expected of him," observed Mrs. Wood, "and I'm sorry and surprised he hasn't swung for his crimes before this. The gallows has groaned for him for years. As to his mother, I've no pity for her. She deserves what has befallen her."

"Dear mother, don't say so," returned Winifred. "One of the consequences of criminal conduct is the shame and disgrace which—worse than any punishment the evil-doer can suffer—is brought by it upon the innocent relatives ; and, if Jack had considered this, perhaps he would not have acted as he has done, and have entailed so much misery on his unhappy parent."

"I always detested Mrs. Sheppard," cried the carpenter's wife bitterly ; "and, I repeat, Bedlam's too good for her."

"My dear," observed Wood, "you should be more charitable——"

"Charitable !" repeated his wife, "that's your constant cry. Marry, come up. I've been a great deal too charitable. Here's Winny always urging you to go and visit Mrs. Sheppard in the asylum, and take her this, and send her that ;—and I've never prevented you, though such mistaken liberality's enough to provoke a saint. And then, forsooth, she must needs prevent your hanging Jack Sheppard after the robbery in Wych Street, when you might have done so. Per-

haps you'll call that charity: *I* call it defeating the ends of justice. See what a horrible rascal you've let loose upon the world."

"I'm sure, mother," rejoined Winifred, "if any one was likely to feel resentment, I was; for no one could be more frightened. But I was sorry for poor Jack—as I am still—and hoped he would mend."

"Mend!" echoed Mrs. Wood contemptuously; "he'll never mend till he comes to Tyburn."

"At least, I will hope so," returned Winifred. "But, as I was saying, I was most dreadfully frightened on the night of the robbery. Though so young at the time, I remember every circumstance distinctly. I was sitting up, lamenting your departure, dear Thames, when, hearing an odd noise, I went to the landing, and, by the light of a dark lantern, saw Jack Sheppard stealing upstairs, followed by two men with crape on their faces. I'm ashamed to say that I was too much terrified to scream out—but ran and hid myself."

"Hold your tongue," cried Mrs. Wood. "I declare you throw me into an ague. Do you think *I* forget it? Didn't they help themselves to all the plate and the money—to several of my best dresses, and, amongst others, to my favourite kincob gown; and I've never been able to get another like it. Marry, come up. I'd hang 'em all, if I could. Were such a thing to happen again, I'd never let Mr. Wood rest till he brought the villains to justice."

"I hope such a thing never *will* happen again, my dear," observed Wood mildly: "but, when it does, it will be time to consider what course we ought to pursue."

"Let them attempt it, if they dare," cried Mrs. Wood, who had worked herself into a passion; "and, I'll warrant 'em, the boldest robber among 'em shall repent it, if he comes across me."

"No doubt, my dear," acquiesced the carpenter :
"no doubt."

Thames, who had been more than once on the point of mentioning his accidental rencounter with Jack Sheppard, not being altogether without apprehension, from the fact of his being in the neighbourhood—now judged it more prudent to say nothing on the subject, from a fear of increasing Mrs. Wood's displeasure ; and he was the more readily induced to do this, as the conversation began to turn upon his own affairs. Mr. Wood could give him no further information respecting Sir Rowland Trenchard than what he had obtained from Kneebone ; but begged him to defer the further consideration of the line of conduct he meant to pursue until the morrow, when he hoped to have a plan to lay before him, of which he would approve.

The night was now advancing, and the party began to think of separating. As Mrs. Wood, who had recovered her good humour, quitted the room, she bestowed a hearty embrace on Thames, and she told him, laughingly, that she would "defer all *she* had to propose to him until to-morrow."

To-morrow ! She never beheld it.

After an affectionate parting with Winifred, Thames was conducted by the carpenter to his sleeping apartment—a comfortable, cozy chamber ; such a one, in short, as can only be met with in the country, with its dimity-curtained bed, its sheets fragrant of lavender, its clean white furniture, and an atmosphere breathing of freshness. Left to himself, he took a survey of the room, and his heart leaped as he beheld over the chimney-piece a portrait of himself. It was a copy of the pencil sketch taken of him nine years ago by Winifred, and awakened a thousand tender recollections.

When about to retire to rest, the rencounter with Jack Sheppard again recurred to him, and he half

blamed himself for not acquainting Mr. Wood with the circumstances, and putting him upon his guard against the possibility of an attack. On weighing the matter over, he grew so uneasy that he resolved to descend, and inform him of his misgivings. But, when he got to the door with this intention, he became ashamed of his fears; and feeling convinced that Jack—bad as he might be—was not capable of such atrocious conduct as to plunder his benefactor twice, he contented himself with looking to the priming of his pistols, and placing them near him, to be ready in case of need, he threw himself on the bed, and speedily fell asleep.

II

The Burglary at Dollis Hill.

THAMES DARRELL'S fears were not, however, groundless. Danger, in the form he apprehended, was lurking outside: nor was he destined to enjoy long repose. On receiving the warning note from the ostler, Jack Sheppard and his companion left Willesden, and taking, as a blind, the direction of Harrow, returned at nightfall by a by-lane to Neasdon, and put up at a little public-house, called the Spotted Dog. Here they remained till midnight, when, calling for their reckoning and their steeds, they left the house.

It was a night well fitted to their enterprise—calm, still, and profoundly dark. As they passed beneath the thick trees that shade the road to Dollis Hill, the gloom was impenetrable. The robbers proceeded singly, and kept on the grass skirting the road, so that no noise was made by their horses' feet. As they neared the house, Jack Sheppard, who led the way, halted, and addressed his companion in a low voice:—

"I don't half like this job, Blueskin," he said; "it always went against the grain. But, since I've seen the friend and companion of my childhood, Thames Darrell, I've no heart for it. Shall we turn back?"

"And disappoint Mr. Wild, captain?" remonstrated the other, in a deferential tone. "You know this is a pet project. It might be dangerous to thwart him."

"Pish!" cried Jack; "I don't value his anger a straw. All our fraternity are afraid of him; but I laugh at his threats. He daren't quarrel with me: and if he does, let him look to himself. I've my own reasons for disliking this job."

"Well, you know I always act under your orders, captain," returned Blueskin; "and if you give the word to retreat, I shall obey, of course; but I know what Edgeworth Bess will say, when we go home empty-handed."

"Why, what will she say?" inquired Sheppard.

"That we were afraid," replied the other; "but never mind her."

"Ay; but I do mind her," cried Jack, upon whom his comrade's observation had produced the desired effect. "We'll do it."

"That's right, captain," rejoined Blueskin. "You pledged yourself to Mr. Wild——"

"I did," interrupted Jack; "and I never yet broke an engagement. Though a thief, Jack Sheppard is a man of his word."

"To be sure he is," acquiesced Blueskin. "I should like to meet the man who would dare to gainsay it."

"One word before we begin, Blueskin," said Jack authoritatively; "in case the family should be alarmed—mind, no violence. There's one person in the house whom I wouldn't frighten for the world."

"Wood's daughter, I suppose?" observed the other.

"You've hit it," answered Sheppard.

"What say you to carrying her off, captain?" suggested Blueskin. "If you've a fancy for the girl, we might do it."

"No—no," laughed Jack. "Bess wouldn't bear a rival. But if you wish to do old Wood a friendly turn, you may bring off his wife."

"I shouldn't mind ridding him of her," said Blueskin gruffly; "and if she comes in my way, may the devil seize me if I don't make short work with her!"

"You forget," rejoined Jack sternly, "I've just said I'll have no violence—mind that."

With this, they dismounted; and fastening their horses to a tree, proceeded towards the house. It was still so dark, that nothing could be distinguished, except the heavy masses of timber by which the premises were surrounded; but as they advanced, lights were visible in some of the windows. Presently they came to a wall, on the other side of which the dog began to bark violently; but Blueskin tossed him a piece of prepared meat, and uttering a low growl, he became silent. They then clambered over a hedge, and scaling another wall, got into the garden at the back of the house.

Treading with noiseless step over the soft mould, they soon reached the building. Arrived there, Jack felt about for a particular window; and having discovered the object of his search, and received the necessary implements from his companion, he instantly commenced operations. In a few seconds the shutters flew open—then the window—and they were in the room. Jack now carefully closed the shutters, while Blueskin struck a light, with which he set fire to a candle. The room they were in was a sort of closet, with the door locked outside; but this was only a moment's obstacle to Jack, who with a chisel forced back the bolt. The operation was effected with so much rapidity and so little noise, that even if any one had been on the alert, he could scarcely have detected it. They then took off their

boots, and crept stealthily upstairs, treading upon the points of their toes so cautiously, that not a board creaked beneath their weight. Pausing at each door on the landing, Jack placed his ear to the keyhole, and listened intently. Having ascertained by the breathing which room Thames occupied, he speedily contrived to fasten him in. He then tried the door of Mr. Wood's bed-chamber—it was locked, with the key left in it. This occasioned a little delay ; but Jack, whose skill as a workman in the particular line he had chosen was unequalled, and who laughed at difficulties, speedily cut out a panel by means of a centre-bit and knife, took the key from the other side, and unlocked the door. Covering his face with a crape mask, and taking the candle from his associate, Jack entered the room ; and, pistol in hand, stepped up to the bed, and approached the light to the eyes of the sleepers. The loud noise proceeding from the couch proved that their slumbers were deep and real, and unconscious of the danger in which she stood, Mrs. Wood turned over to obtain a more comfortable position. During this movement, Jack grasped the barrel of his pistol, held his breath, and motioned to Blueskin, who bared a long knife, to keep still. The momentary alarm over, he threw a piece of wash-leather over a bureau, so as to deaden the sound, and instantly broke it open with a small crowbar. While he was filling his pockets with golden coin from this store, Blueskin had pulled the plate-chest from under the bed, and having forced it open, began filling a canvas bag with its contents—silver coffee-pots, chocolate dishes, waiters, trays, tankards, goblets, and candlesticks. It might be supposed that these articles, when thrust together into the bag, would have jingled ; but these skilful practitioners managed matters so well that no noise was made. After rifling the room of everything portable, including some of Mrs. Wood's ornaments and wearing

apparel, they prepared to depart. Jack then intimated his intention of visiting Winifred's chamber, in which several articles of value were known to be kept; but as, notwithstanding his reckless character, he still retained a feeling of respect for the object of his boyish affections, he would not suffer Blueskin to accompany him, so he commanded him to keep watch over the sleepers—strictly enjoining him, however, to do them no injury. Again having recourse to the centre-bit—for Winifred's door was locked—Jack had nearly cut out a panel, when a sudden outcry was raised in the carpenter's chamber. The next moment, a struggle was heard, and Blueskin appeared at the door followed by Mrs. Wood.

Jack instantly extinguished the light, and called to his comrade to come after him. But Blueskin found it impossible to make off—at least with the spoil—Mrs. Wood having laid hold of the canvas bag.

“Give back the things!” cried the lady. “Help!—help, Mr. Wood.”

“Leave go!” thundered Blueskin; “leave go—you'd better!”—and he held the sack as firmly as he could with one hand, while with the other he searched for his knife.

“No, I won't leave go!” screamed Mrs. Wood. “Fire!—murder—thieves!—I've got one of them!”

“Come along,” cried Jack.

“I can't,” answered Blueskin. “This she-devil has got hold of the sack. Leave go, I tell you!” and he forced open the knife with his teeth.

“Help!—murder!—thieves!” screamed Mrs. Wood;—“Owen—Owen!—Thames, help!”

“Coming!” cried Mr. Wood, leaping from the bed. “Where are you?”

“Here,” replied Mrs. Wood. “Help—I'll hold him!”

“Leave her,” cried Jack, darting downstairs, amid a furious ringing of bells—“the house is alarmed—follow me!”

"Curses light on you!" cried Blueskin savagely; "since you won't be advised, take your fate."

And seizing her by the hair, he pulled back her head, and drew the knife with all his force across her throat. There was a dreadful stifled groan, and she fell heavily upon the landing. The screams of the unfortunate woman had aroused Thames from his slumbers. Snatching up his pistols, he rushed to the door, but to his horror found it fastened. He heard the struggle on the landing, the fall of the heavy body, the groan—and excited almost to frenzy by his fears, he succeeded in forcing open the door. By this time, several of the terrified domestics appeared with lights. A terrible spectacle was presented to the young man's gaze: the door deluged with blood—the mangled and lifeless body of Mrs. Wood—Winifred fainted in the arms of a female attendant—and Wood standing beside them almost in a state of distraction. Thus, in a few minutes, had this happy family been plunged into the depths of misery. At this juncture, a cry was raised by a servant from below, that the robbers were flying through the garden. Darting to a window looking in that direction, Thames threw it up, and discharged both his pistols, but without effect. In another minute, the tramp of horses' feet told that the perpetrators of the outrage had effected their escape.

III

Jack Sheppard's Quarrel with Jonathan Wild.

SCARCELY an hour after the horrible occurrence just related, as Jonathan Wild was seated in the audience-chamber of his residence at the Old Bailey, occupied, like Peachum (for whose portrait he sat), with his

account-books and registers, he was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Quilt Arnold, who announced Jack Sheppard and Blueskin.

"Ah!" cried Wild, laying down his pen and looking up with a smile of satisfaction. "I was just thinking of you, Jack. What news? Have you done the trick at Dollis Hill?—brought off the swag—eh?"

"No," answered Jack, flinging himself sullenly into a chair; "I've not."

"Why, how's this?" exclaimed Jonathan. "Jack Sheppard failed! I'd not believe it, if any one but himself told me so."

"I've not failed," returned Jack angrily; "but we've done too much."

"I'm no reader of riddles," said Jonathan. "Speak plainly."

"Let this speak for me," said Sheppard, tossing a heavy bag of money towards him. "You can generally understand that language. There's more than I undertook to bring. It has been purchased by blood!"

"What! have you cut old Wood's throat?" asked Wild with great unconcern, as he took up the bag.

"If I *had*, you'd not have seen me here," replied Jack sullenly. "The blood that has been spilt is that of his wife."

"It was her own fault," observed Blueskin moodily. "She wouldn't let me go. I did it in self-defence."

"I care not why you did it," said Jack sternly. "We work together no more."

"Come, come, captain," remonstrated Blueskin. "I thought you'd have got rid of your ill-humour by this time. You know as well as I do that it was an accident."

"Accident or not," rejoined Sheppard, "you're no longer pal of mine."

"And so this is my reward for having made you the tip-top cracksman you are," muttered Blueskin;—"to be turned off at a moment's notice, because I

silenced a noisy woman. It's too hard. Think better of it."

"My mind's made up," rejoined Jack coldly—"we part to-night."

"I'll not go," answered the other. "I love you like a son, and will follow you like a dog. You'd not know what to do without me, and shan't drive me off."

"Well!" remarked Jonathan, who had paid little attention to the latter part of the conversation, "this is an awkward business certainly; but we must do the best we can in it. You must keep out of the way till it's blown over. I can accommodate you below."

"I don't require it," returned Sheppard. "I'm tired of the life I'm leading. I shall quit it and go abroad."

"I'll go with you," said Blueskin.

"Before either of you go you will ask my permission," said Jonathan coolly.

"How?" exclaimed Sheppard. "Do you mean to say you will interfere——"

"I mean to say this," interrupted Wild, with contemptuous calmness, "that I'll neither allow you to leave England nor the profession you've engaged in. I wouldn't allow you to be honest even if you could be so—which I doubt. You are my slave—and such you shall continue."

"Slave!" echoed Jack.

"Dare to disobey," continued Jonathan, "neglect my orders, and I will hang you." Sheppard started to his feet.

"Hear me," he cried, restraining himself with difficulty. "It is time you should know whom you have to deal with. Henceforth, I utterly throw off the yoke you have laid upon me. I will neither stir hand nor foot for you more. Attempt to molest me and I split. You are more in my power than I am in yours. Jack Sheppard is a match for Jonathan Wild any day."

"That he is," added Blueskin approvingly.

Jonathan smiled contemptuously.

"One motive alone shall induce me to go on with you," said Jack.

"What's that?" asked Wild.

"The youth whom you delivered to Van Galgebok—Thames Darrell—is returned."

"Impossible!" cried Jonathan. "He was thrown overboard, and perished at sea."

"He is alive," replied Jack; "I have seen him, and might have conversed with him if I had chosen. Now, I know you can restore him to his rights if you choose. Do so, and I am yours as heretofore."

"Humph!" exclaimed Jonathan.

"Your answer!" cried Sheppard. "Yes or No?"

"I will make no terms with you," rejoined Wild sternly. "You have defied me, and shall feel my power. You have been useful to me, or I would not have spared you thus long. I swore to hang you two years ago, but I deferred my purpose."

"Deferred!" echoed Sheppard.

"Hear me out," said Jonathan. "You came hither under my protection, and you shall depart freely—nay more, you shall have an hour's grace. After that time I shall place my setters on your heels."

"You cannot prevent my departure," replied Jack dauntlessly, "and therefore your offer is no favour. But I tell you, in return, I shall take no pains to hide myself. If you want me you know where to find me."

"An hour," said Jonathan, looking at his watch;—"remember!"

"If you send for me to the Cross Shovels in the Mint, where I'm going with Blueskin, I will surrender myself without resistance," returned Jack.

"You will spare the officers a labour then," rejoined Jonathan.

"Can't I settle this business, captain?" muttered Blueskin, drawing a pistol.

"Don't harm him," said Jack carelessly ; "he dares not do it." So saying he left the room.

"Blueskin," said Jonathan, as that worthy was about to follow, "I advise you to remain with me."

"No," answered the ruffian moodily. "If you arrest him you must arrest me also."

"As you will," said Jonathan, seating himself.

Jack and his comrade went to the Mint, where he was joined by Edgeworth Bess, with whom he sat down most unconcernedly to supper.

His revelry, however, was put an end to at the expiration of the time mentioned by Jonathan, by the entrance of a posse of constables with Quilt Arnold and Abraham Mendez at their head. Jack, to the surprise of all his companions, at once surrendered himself ; but Blueskin would have made a fierce resistance and attempted a rescue, if he had not been ordered by his leader to desist. He then made off. Edgeworth Bess, who passed for Sheppard's wife, was secured. They were hurried before a magistrate and charged by Jonathan Wild with various robberies ; but, as Jack Sheppard stated that he had most important disclosures to make, as well as charges to bring forward against his accuser, he was committed with his female companion to the New Prison in Clerkenwell for further examination.

IV

Jack Sheppard's Escape from the New Prison.

IN consequence of Jack Sheppard's desperate character, it was judged expedient by the keeper of the New Prison to load him with fetters of unusual weight, and to place him in a cell which, from its strength and security, was called the Newgate Ward. The ward in

which he was confined was about six yards in length, and three in width, and in height might be about twelve feet. The windows, which were about nine feet from the floor, had no glass, but were secured by thick iron bars, and an oaken beam. Along the floor ran an iron bar, to which Jack's chain was attached, so that he could move along it from one end of the chamber to the other. No prisoner except Edgeworth Bess was placed in the same cell with him. Jack was in excellent spirits; and by his wit, drollery, and agreeable demeanour, speedily became a great favourite with the turnkey, who allowed him every indulgence consistent with his situation. The report of his detention caused an immense sensation. Numberless charges were preferred against him; amongst others, information was lodged of the robbery at Dollis Hill and murder of Mrs. Wood, and a large reward offered for the apprehension of Blueskin; and as, in addition to this, Jack had threatened to impeach Wild, his next examination was looked forward to with the greatest interest.

The day before this examination was appointed to take place—the third of the prisoner's detention—an old man, respectably dressed, requested permission to see him. Jack's friends were allowed to visit him; but, as he had openly avowed his intention of attempting an escape, their proceedings were narrowly watched. The old man was conducted to Jack's cell by the turnkey, who remained near him during the interview. He appeared to be a stranger to the prisoner, and the sole motive of his visit curiosity. After a brief conversation, which Sheppard sustained with his accustomed liveliness, the old man turned to Bess and addressed a few words of commonplace gallantry to her. While this was going on, Jack suddenly made a movement which attracted the turnkey's attention; and during that interval the old man slipped some articles wrapped in a handkerchief into Bess's hands, who instantly secreted

them in her bosom. The turnkey looked round the next moment, but the manœuvre escaped his observation. After a little further discourse the old man took his departure. Left alone with Edgeworth Bess, Jack burst into a loud laugh of exultation.

"Blueskin's a friend indeed," he said. "His disguise was capital; but I detected it in a moment. Has he given you the tools?"

"He has," replied Bess, producing the handkerchief.

"Bravo," cried Sheppard, examining its contents, which proved to be a file, a chisel, two or three gimlets, and a piercer. "Jonathan Wild shall find it's not easy to detain me. As sure as he's now living, I'll pay him a visit in the Old Bailey before morning. And then I'll pay off old scores. It's almost worth while being sent to prison to have the pleasure of escaping. I shall now be able to test my skill."

And, running on in this way, he carefully concealed the tools.

Whether the turnkey entertained any suspicions of the old man, Jack could not tell, but that night he was more than usually rigorous in his search; and having carefully examined the prisoners, and finding nothing to excite his suspicions, he departed tolerably satisfied.

As soon as he was certain he should be disturbed no more, Jack set to work, and with the aid of the file in less than an hour had freed himself from his fetters. With Bess's assistance he then climbed up to the window, which, as has just been stated, was secured by iron bars of great thickness, crossed by a stout beam of oak. The very sight of these impediments would have appalled a less courageous spirit than Sheppard's—but nothing could daunt him. To work then he went, and with wonderful industry filed off two of the iron bars. Just as he completed this operation, the file broke. The oaken beam, nine inches in thickness, was now the sole but most

formidable obstacle to his flight. With his gimlet he contrived to bore a number of holes so close together that at last one end of the bar, being completely pierced through, yielded; and pursuing the same plan with the other extremity, it fell out altogether.

This last operation was so fatiguing, that for a short time he was obliged to pause to recover the use of his fingers. He then descended; and having induced Bess to take off some part of her clothing, he tore the gown and petticoat into shreds, and twisted them into a sort of rope, which he fastened to the lower bars of the window. With some difficulty he contrived to raise her to the window, and with still greater difficulty to squeeze her through it—her bulk being much greater than his own. He then made a sort of running noose, passed it over her body, and taking firm hold of the bars, prepared to guide her descent. But Bess could scarcely summon resolution enough to hazard the experiment; and it was only on Jack's urgent entreaties, and even threats, that she could be prevailed on to trust herself to the frail tenure of the rope he had prepared. At length, however, she threw herself off; and, Jack carefully guiding the rope, she landed in safety.

The next moment he was by her side. But the great point was still unaccomplished. They had escaped from the New Prison, it is true; but the wall of Clerkenwell Bridewell, by which that gaol was formerly surrounded, and which was more than twenty feet high, and protected by formidable and bristling *chevaux-de-frise*, remained to be scaled. Jack, however, had an expedient for mastering this difficulty. He ventured to the great gates, and by inserting his gimlets into the wood at intervals, so as to form points upon which he could rest his foot, he contrived to ascend them; and when at the top, having fastened a portion of his dress to the spikes, he managed, not

without considerable risk, to draw up his female companion. Once over the iron spikes, Bess exhibited no reluctance to be let down on the other side of the wall. Having seen his mistress safe down, Jack instantly descended, leaving the best part of his clothes, as a memorial of his flight, to the gaoler. And thus he effected his escape from the New Prison.

V

The Disguise.

IN a hollow in the meadows behind the prison whence Jack Sheppard had escaped—for, at this time, the whole of the now thickly peopled district north of Clerkenwell Bridewell was open country, stretching out in fertile fields in the direction of Islington—and about a quarter of a mile off, stood a solitary hovel, known as Black Mary's Hole. This spot, which still retains its name, acquired the appellation from an old crone who lived there, and who, in addition to a very equivocal character for honesty, enjoyed the reputation of being a witch. Without inquiring into the correctness of the latter part of the story, it may be sufficient to state, that Black Mary was a person in whom Jack Sheppard thought he could confide, and as Edgeworth Bess was incapable of much further exertion, he determined to leave her in the old woman's care till the following night, while he shifted for himself and fulfilled his design—for however rash or hazardous a project might be, if once conceived, Jack always executed it—of visiting Jonathan Wild at his house in the Old Bailey.

It was precisely two o'clock on the morning of Whit-Monday, the 25th of May 1724, when the remarkable

escape before detailed was completed ; and, though it wanted full two hours to daybreak, the glimmer of a waning moon prevented it from being totally dark. Casting a hasty glance, as he was about to turn an angle of the wall, at the great gates and upper windows of the prison, and perceiving no symptoms of pursuit, Jack proceeded towards the hovel at a very deliberate pace, carefully assisting his female companion over every obstacle in the road, and bearing her in his arms when, as was more than once the case, she sank from fright and exhaustion. In this way he crossed one or two public gardens and a bowling-green—the neighbourhood of Clerkenwell then abounded in such places of amusement—passed the noted Ducking Pond, where Black Mary had been frequently immersed ; and striking off to the left across the fields, arrived in a few minutes at his destination.

Descending the hollow, or rather excavation—for it was an old disused clay-pit, at the bottom of which the cottage was situated—he speedily succeeded in arousing the ancient sibyl ; and having committed Edgeworth Bess to her care, with a promise of an abundant reward in case she watched diligently over her safety, and attended to her comforts till his return—to all of which Black Mary readily agreed—he departed with a heart lightened of half its load.

Jack's first object was to seek out Blueskin, whom he had no doubt he should find at the New Mint, at Wapping, for the Old Mint no longer afforded a secure retreat to the robber ; and with this view, he made the best of his way along a by-lane leading towards Hockley-in-the-Hole.

He had not proceeded far when he was alarmed by the tramp of a horse, which seemed to be rapidly approaching, and he had scarcely time to leap the hedge and conceal himself behind a tree, when a tall man, enveloped in an ample cloak, with his hat pulled

over his brows, rode by at full speed. Another horseman followed quickly at the heels of the first; but, just as he passed the spot where Jack stood, his steed missed its footing and fell. Either ignorant of the accident, or heedless of it, the foremost horseman pursued his way without even turning his head.

Conceiving the opportunity too favourable to be lost, Jack sprang suddenly over the hedge, and before the man, who was floundering on the ground with one foot in the stirrup, could extricate himself from his embarrassing position, secured his pistols, which he drew from the holsters, and held them to his head. The fellow swore lustily, in a voice which Jack instantly recognised as that of Quilt Arnold, and vainly attempted to rise and draw his sword.

"Dog!" thundered Sheppard, putting the muzzle of the pistol so close to the janizary's ear, that the touch of the cold iron made him start, "don't you know me?"

"Blood and thunder!" exclaimed Quilt, opening his eyes with astonishment. "It can't be Captain Sheppard?"

"It *is*," replied Jack, "and you had better have met the devil on your road than me. Do you remember what I said when you took me at the Mint four days ago? I told you my turn would come. It *has* come—and sooner than you expected."

"So I find, captain," rejoined Quilt submissively: "but you're too noble-hearted to take advantage of my situation. Besides, I acted for others, and not for myself."

"I know it," replied Sheppard, "and therefore I spare your life."

"I was sure you wouldn't injure me, captain," remarked Quilt, in a wheedling tone, while he felt about for his sword; "you're far too brave to strike a fallen man."

"Ah! traitor!" cried Jack, who had noticed the movement; "make such another attempt, and it shall cost you your life." So saying, he unbuckled the belt to which the janizary's hanger was attached, and fastened it to his own girdle. "And now," he continued sternly, "was it your master who has just ridden by?"

"No," answered Quilt sullenly.

"Who, then?" demanded Jack. "Speak, or I fire!"

"Well, if you *will* have it, it's Sir Rowland Trenchard."

"Sir Rowland Trenchard!" echoed Jack, in amazement. "What are you doing with him?"

"It's a long story, captain, and I've no breath to tell it—unless you choose to release me," rejoined Quilt.

"Get up, then," said Jack, freeing his foot from the stirrup. "Now—begin."

Quilt, however, seemed unwilling to speak.

"I should be sorry to proceed to extremities," continued Sheppard, again raising the pistol.

"Well, since you force me to betray my master's secrets," replied Quilt sullenly, "I've ridden express to Manchester to deliver a message to Sir Rowland."

"Respecting Thames Darrell?" observed Jack.

"Why, how the devil did you happen to guess that?" cried the janizary.

"No matter," replied Sheppard. "I'm glad to find I'm right. You informed Sir Rowland that Thames Darrell was returned?"

"Exactly so," replied Quilt; "and he instantly decided upon returning to London with me. We've ridden post all the way, and I'm horribly tired, or you wouldn't have mastered me so easily."

"Perhaps not," replied Jack, to whom an idea had suddenly occurred. "Now, sir, I'll trouble you for

your coat. I've left mine on the spikes of the New Prison, and must borrow yours."

"Why, surely you can't be in earnest, captain. You wouldn't rob Mr. Wild's chief janizary?"

"I'd rob Mr. Wild himself if I met him," retorted Jack. "Come, off with it, sirrah, or I'll blow out your brains, in the first place, and strip you afterwards."

"Well, rather than you should commit so great a crime, captain, here it is," replied Quilt, handing him the garment in question. "Anything else?"

"Your waistcoat."

"Zounds! captain, I shall get my death of cold. I was in hopes you'd be content with my hat and wig."

"I shall require them as well," rejoined Sheppard, "and your boots."

"My boots! Fire and fury! They won't fit you; they are too large. Besides, how am I to ride home without them!"

"Don't distress yourself," returned Jack, "you shall walk. Now," he added, as his commands were reluctantly obeyed, "help me on with them."

Quilt knelt down, as if he meant to comply; but, watching his opportunity, he made a sudden grasp at Sheppard's leg with the intention of overthrowing him. But Jack was too nimble for him. Striking out his foot, he knocked half a dozen teeth down the janizary's throat; and, seconding the kick with a blow on the head from the butt-end of the pistol, stretched him, senseless and bleeding, on the ground.

"Like master, like man," observed Jack, as he rolled the inanimate body to the side of the road. "From Jonathan Wild's confidential servant what could be expected but treachery?"

With this, he proceeded to dress himself in Quilt Arnold's clothes, pulled the wig over his face and eyes so as completely to conceal his features, slouched his hat over his brows, drew the huge boots above his knees,

and muffled himself up in the best way he could. On searching the coat, he found, amongst other matters, a mask, a key, and a pocket-book. The latter appeared to contain several papers, which Jack carefully put by, in the hope that they might turn out of importance in a scheme of vengeance which he meditated against the thief-taker. He then mounted the jaded hack, which had long since regained its legs, and was quietly browsing the grass at the roadside, and, striking spurs into its side, rode off. He had not proceeded far when he encountered Sir Rowland, who, having missed his attendant, had returned to look after him.

"What has delayed you?" demanded the knight impatiently.

"My horse has had a fall," replied Jack, assuming to perfection—for he was a capital mimic—the tones of Quilt Arnold. "It was some time before I could get him to move."

"I fancied I heard voices," rejoined Sir Rowland.

"So did I," answered Jack; "we had better move on. This is a noted place for highwaymen."

"I thought you told me that the rascal who has so long been the terror of the town—Jack Sheppard—was in custody."

"So he is," returned Jack, "but there's no saying how long he may remain so. Besides, there are greater rascals than Jack Sheppard at liberty, Sir Rowland."

Sir Rowland made no reply, but angrily quickened his pace. The pair then descended Saffron Hill, threaded Field Lane, and, entering Holborn, passed over the little bridge which then crossed the muddy waters of Fleet Ditch, mounted Snow Hill, and soon drew in the bridle before Jonathan Wild's door. Aware of Quilt Arnold's mode of proceeding, Jack instantly dismounted, and, instead of knocking, opened the door with a pass-key. The porter instantly made his appearance, and Sheppard ordered him to take care of the horses.

"Well, what sort of journey have you had, Quilt?" asked the man, as he hastened to assist Sir Rowland to dismount.

"Oh! we've lost no time, as you perceive," replied Jack. "Is the governor within?"

"Yes; you'll find him in the audience-chamber. He has got Blueskin with him."

"Ah, indeed! what's he doing here?" inquired Jack.

"Come to buy off Jack Sheppard, I suppose," replied the fellow. "But it won't do. Mr. Wild has made up his mind; and, when that's the case, all the persuasion on earth won't turn him. Jack will be tried to-morrow; and as sure as my name's Obadiah Lemon, he'll take up his quarters at the King's Head," pointing to Newgate, "over the way."

"Well, we shall see," replied Jack. "Look to the horses, Obadiah. This way, Sir Rowland."

As familiar as Quilt Arnold himself with every part of Wild's mysterious abode, as well as with the ways of its inmates, Jack, without a moment's hesitation, took up a lamp that was burning in the hall, and led his companion up the great stone stairs. Arrived at the audience-chamber, he set down the light upon a stand, threw open the door, and announced in a loud voice, but with the perfect intonation of the person he represented—"Sir Rowland Trenchard."

Jonathan, who was engaged in conversation with Blueskin, instantly arose, and bowed with cringing ceremoniousness to the knight. The latter haughtily returned his salutation, and flung himself, as if exhausted, into a chair.

"You've arrived sooner than I expected, Sir Rowland," observed the thief-taker. "Lost no time on the road—eh? I didn't expect you till to-morrow at the earliest. Excuse me an instant while I dismiss this person. You've your answer, Blueskin," he added, pushing that individual, who seemed unwilling to de-

part, towards the door ; "it's useless to urge the matter further. Jack is registered in the Black Book."

"One word before I go," urged Blueskin.

"Not a syllable," replied Wild. "If you talk as long as an Old Bailey counsel, you'll not alter my determination."

"Won't my life do as well as his?" supplicated the other.

"Humph!" exclaimed Jonathan doubtfully. "And you would surrender yourself—eh?"

"I'll surrender myself at once, if you'll engage to bring him off! and you'll get the reward from old Wood. It's two hundred pounds. Recollect that."

"Faithful fellow!" murmured Jack. "I forgive him his disobedience."

"Will you do it?" persisted Blueskin.

"No," replied Wild ; "and I've only listened to your absurd proposal, to see how far your insane attachment to this lad would carry you."

"I *do* love him," cried Blueskin, "and that's the long and short of it. I've taught him all he can do ; and there isn't his fellow, and never will be again. I've seen many a clever cracksman, but never one like him. If you hang Jack Sheppard, you'll cut off the flower o' the perfession. But I'll not believe it of you. It's all very well to read him a lesson, and teach him obedience ; but you've gone far enough for that."

"Not quite," rejoined the thief-taker significantly.

"Well," growled Blueskin, "you've had my offer."

"And you my warning," retorted Wild. "Good-night."

"Blueskin," whispered Jack, in his natural tones, as the other passed him, "wait without."

"Powers o' mercy!" cried Blueskin, starting.

"What's the matter?" demanded Jonathan harshly.

"Nothin'—nothin'," returned Blueskin ; "only I thought——"

"You saw the hangman, no doubt," said Jack. "Take courage, man! it is only Quilt Arnold. Come, make yourself scarce. Don't you see Mr. Wild's busy." And then he added, in an undertone, "Conceal yourself outside, and be within call." Blueskin nodded, and left the room. Jack affected to close the door, but left it slightly ajar.

"What did you say to him?" inquired Jonathan suspiciously.

"I advised him not to trouble you further about Jack Sheppard," answered the supposed janizary.

"He seems infatuated about the lad," observed Wild. "I shall be obliged to hang him to keep him company. And now, Sir Rowland," he continued, turning to the knight, "to our own concerns. It's a long time since we met, eight years and more. I hope you've enjoyed your health. 'Slife! you are wonderfully altered. I should scarcely have known you."

The knight was indeed greatly changed. Though not much past the middle term of life, he seemed prematurely stricken with old age. His frame was wasted, and slightly bent; his eyes were hollow, his complexion haggard, and his beard, which had remained unshorn during his hasty journey, was perfectly white. His manner, however, was as stern and haughty as ever, and his glances retained their accustomed fire.

"I did not come hither to consult you as to the state of my health, sir," he observed, displeased by Jonathan's allusion to the alteration in his appearance.

"True," replied Wild. "You were no doubt surprised by the unlooked-for intelligence I sent you on your nephew's return?"

"Was it *unlooked-for* on your part?" demanded the knight distrustfully.

"On my soul, yes," rejoined Jonathan. "I should as soon have expected the bones of Tom Sheppard to

reunite themselves and walk out of that case, as Thames Darrell to return. The skipper, Van Galgebok, affirmed to me—nay, gave me the additional testimony of two of his crew—that he was thrown overboard. But it appears he was picked up by fishermen, and carried to France, where he has remained ever since, and where it would have been well for him if he had remained altogether.”

“Have you seen him?” asked Trenchard.

“I have,” replied Wild; “and nothing but the evidence of my senses would have made me believe he was living, after the positive assurance I received to the contrary. He is at present with Mr. Wood—the person whom you may remember adopted him—at Dollis Hill, near Willesden; and it’s a singular but fortunate circumstance, so far as we are concerned, that Mrs. Wood chanced to be murdered by Blueskin, the fellow who just left the room, on the very night of his return, as it has thrown the house into such confusion, and so distracted them, that he has had no time as yet for hostile movements.”

“And what course do you propose to pursue in reference to him?” asked Sir Rowland.

“My plan is a very simple one,” rejoined the thief-taker, smiling bitterly. “I would treat him as you treated his father, Sir Rowland.”

“Murder him!” cried Trenchard, shuddering.

“Ay, murder him, if you like the term,” returned Wild. “I should call it putting him out of the way. But, no matter how you phrase it, the end is the same.”

“I cannot consent to it,” replied Sir Rowland firmly. “Since the sea has spared him, I will spare him. It is in vain to struggle against the arm of fate. I will shed no more blood.”

“And perish upon the gibbet,” rejoined Jonathan contemptuously.

"Flight is still left me," replied Trenchard. "I can escape to France."

"And do you think I'll allow you to depart," cried Jonathan, in a menacing tone, "and compromise *my* safety? No, no. We are linked together in this matter, and must go through with it. You cannot—shall not retreat."

"Death and hell!" cried Sir Rowland, rising and drawing his sword; "do you think you can shackle my free will, villain?"

"In this particular instance I do, Sir Rowland," replied Jonathan calmly, "because you are wholly in my power. But be patient; I am your fast friend. *Thames Darrell* MUST die. Our mutual safety requires it. Leave the means to me."

"More blood! more blood!" cried Trenchard, passing his hand with agony across his brow. "Shall I never banish those horrible phantoms from my couch—the father with his bleeding breast and dripping hair?—the mother with her wringing hands and looks of vengeance and reproach? And must another be added to their number—their son? Horror! let me be spared this new crime? And yet the gibbet—my name tarnished—my escutcheon blotted by the hangman! No, I cannot submit to that."

"I should think not," observed Jonathan, who had some practice in the knight's moods, and knew how to humour him. "It's a miserable weakness to be afraid of bloodshed. The general who gives an order for wholesale carnage never sleeps a wink the less soundly for the midnight groans of his victims, and we should deride him as a coward if he did. And life is much the same, whether taken in battle, on the couch, or by the roadside. Besides those whom I have slain with my own hands, I've brought upwards of thirty persons to the gallows. Most of their relics are in yonder cases; but I don't remember that any of them have

disturbed my rest. The mode of destruction makes no difference. It's precisely the same thing to me to bid my janizaries cut Thames Darrell's throat, as to order Jack Sheppard's execution." As Jonathan said this, Jack's hand involuntarily sought a pistol.

"But to the point," continued Wild, unconscious of the peril in which the remark had placed him—"to the point. On the terms that procured your liberation from Newgate, I will free you from this new danger."

"Those terms were the third of my estate," observed Trenchard bitterly.

"What of that?" rejoined Jonathan. "Any price was better than your head. If Thames Darrell escapes you will lose both life and property."

"True, true," replied the knight, with an agonised look; "there's no alternative."

"None whatever," rejoined Wild. "Is it a bargain?"

"Take half of my estate—take all—my life, if you will—I am weary of it!" cried Trenchard passionately.

"No," replied Jonathan, "I'll not take you at your word, as regards the latter proposition. We shall both, I hope, live to enjoy our shares—long after Thames Darrell is forgotten—ha! ha! A third of your estate I accept. And as these things should always be treated as matters of business, I'll just draw up a memorandum of our arrangement." And, as he spoke, he took up a sheet of paper, and hastily traced a few lines upon it.

"Sign this," he said, pushing the document towards Sir Rowland.

The knight mechanically complied with his request.

"Enough!" cried Jonathan, eagerly pocketing the memorandum. "And now, in return for your liberality, I'll inform you of a secret with which it is important you should be acquainted."

"A secret!" exclaimed Trenchard. "Concerning whom?"

"Mrs. Sheppard," replied Jonathan mysteriously.

"Mrs. Sheppard!" echoed Jack, surprised out of his caution.

"Ah!" exclaimed Wild, looking angrily towards his supposed attendant.

"I beg pardon, sir," replied Jack, with the accent and manner of the janizary; "I was betrayed into the exclamation by my surprise that anything in which Sir Rowland Trenchard was interested could have reference to so humble a person as Mrs. Sheppard."

"Be pleased, then, in future, not to let your surprise find vent in words," rejoined Jonathan sternly. "My servants, like Eastern mutes, must have eyes, and ears—and *hands*, if need be—but no tongues. You understand me, sirrah?"

"Perfectly," replied Jack. "I'm dumb."

"Your secret?" demanded Trenchard impatiently.

"I need not remind you, Sir Rowland," replied Wild, "that you had two sisters—Aliva and Constance."

"Both are dead," observed the knight gloomily.

"Not so," answered Wild. "Constance is yet living."

"Constance alive! Impossible!" ejaculated Trenchard.

"I've proofs to the contrary," replied Jonathan.

"If this is the case, where is she?"

"In Bedlam," replied the thief-taker with a Satanic grin.

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed the knight, upon whom a light seemed suddenly to break. "You mentioned Mrs. Sheppard. What has she to do with Constance Trenchard?"

"Mrs. Sheppard is Constance Trenchard," replied Jonathan maliciously.

Here Jack Sheppard was unable to repress an exclamation of astonishment.

"Again," cried Jonathan sternly: "beware!"

"What?" vociferated Trenchard. "My sister the

wife of one condemned felon ! the parent of another ! It cannot be."

"It *is* so, nevertheless," replied Wild. "Stolen by a gipsy when scarcely five years old, Constance Trenchard, after various vicissitudes, was carried to London, where she lived in great poverty, with the dregs of society. It is useless to trace out her miserable career ; though I can easily do so if you require it. To preserve herself, however, from destitution, or what she considered worse, she wedded a journeyman carpenter, named Sheppard."

"Alas ! that one so highly born should submit to such a degradation !" groaned the knight.

"I see nothing surprising in it," rejoined Jonathan. "In the first place she had no knowledge of her birth ; and, consequently, no false pride to get rid of. In the second, she was wretchedly poor, and assailed by temptations of which you can form no idea. Distress like hers might palliate far greater offences than she ever committed. With the same inducements we should all do the same thing. Poor girl ! She was beautiful once ; so beautiful as to make *me*, who care little for the allurements of women, fancy myself enamoured of her."

Jack Sheppard again sought his pistol, and was only withheld from levelling it at the thief-taker's head, by the hope that he might gather some further information respecting his mother. And he had good reason before long to congratulate himself on his forbearance.

"What proof have you of the truth of this story ?" inquired Trenchard.

"This," replied Jonathan, taking a paper from a portfolio, and handing it to the knight, "this written evidence, signed by Martha Cooper, the gipsy, by whom the girl was stolen, and who was afterwards executed for a similar crime. It is attested, you will

observe, by the Reverend Mr. Purney, the present ordinary of Newgate."

"I am acquainted with Mr. Purney's handwriting," said Jack, advancing, "and can at once decide whether this is a forgery or not."

"Look at it, then," said Wild, giving him the portfolio.

"It's the ordinary's signature, undoubtedly," replied Jack.

And as he gave back the portfolio to Sir Rowland he contrived, unobserved, to drop the precious document into his sleeve, and from thence into his pocket.

"And does any of our bright blood flow in the veins of a ruffianly housebreaker?" cried Trenchard, with a look of bewilderment. "I'll not believe it."

"Others may, if you won't," muttered Jack, retiring. "Thank Heaven! I'm not basely born."

"Now, mark me," said Jonathan, "and you'll find I don't do things by halves. By your father, Sir Montacute Trenchard's will, you are aware—and, therefore, I need not repeat it, except for the special purpose I have in view—you are aware, I say, that by this will, in case your sister Aliva died without issue, or on the death of such issue, the property reverts to Constance and *her* issue."

"I hear," said Sir Rowland moodily.

"And I," muttered Jack.

"Thames Darrell once destroyed," pursued Jonathan, "Constance—or rather Mrs. Sheppard—becomes entitled to the estates; which eventually—provided he escapes the gallows—would descend to her son."

"Ha!" exclaimed Jack, drawing in his breath, and leaning forward with intense curiosity.

"Well, sir?" gasped Sir Rowland.

"But this need give you no uneasiness," pursued Jonathan. "Mrs. Sheppard, as I told you, is in

Bedlam, an incurable maniac ; while her son is in the New Prison, whence he will only be removed to Newgate and Tyburn."

"So you think," muttered Jack between his ground teeth.

"To make your mind perfectly easy on the score of Mrs. Sheppard," continued Jonathan ; "after we've disposed of Thames Darrell, I'll visit her in Bedlam ; and, as I understand I form one of her chief terrors, I'll give her such a fright that I'll engage she shan't long survive it."

"Devil !" muttered Jack, again grasping his pistol. But, feeling secure of vengeance, he determined to abide his time.

"And now, having got rid of the minor obstacles," said Jonathan, "I'll submit a plan for the removal of the main difficulty. Thames Darrell, I've said, is at Mr. Wood's at Dollis Hill, wholly unsuspecting of any designs against him, and, in fact, entirely ignorant of your being acquainted with his return, or even of his existence. In this state it will be easy to draw him into a snare. To-morrow night—or rather to-night, for we are fast verging on another day—I propose to lure him out of the house by a stratagem which I am sure will prove infallible ; and then, what so easy as to knock him on the head. To make sure work of it, I'll superintend the job myself. Before midnight, I'll answer for it, it shall be done. My janizaries shall go with me. You hear what I say, Quilt ?" he added, looking at Jack.

"I do," replied Sheppard.

"Abraham Mendez will like the task—for he has entertained a hatred to the memory of Thames Darrell ever since he received the wound in the head, when the two lads attempted to break out of Saint Giles's Roundhouse. I've despatched him to the New Prison. But I expect him back every minute."

"The New Prison!" exclaimed Sheppard. "What is he gone there for?"

"With a message to the turnkey to look after his prisoner," replied Wild with a cunning smile. "Jack Sheppard had a visitor, I understand, yesterday, and may make an attempt to escape. It's as well to be on the safe side."

"It is," replied Jack.

At this moment, his quick ears detected the sound of footsteps on the stairs. He drew both his pistols, and prepared for a desperate encounter.

"There is another mystery I would have solved," said Trenchard, addressing Wild; "you have told me much, but not enough."

"What do you require further?" asked Jonathan.

"The name and rank of Thames Darrell's father," said the knight.

"Another time," replied the thief-taker evasively.

"I will have it now," rejoined Trenchard, "or our agreement is void."

"You cannot help yourself, Sir Rowland," replied Jonathan contemptuously.

"Indeed!" replied the knight, drawing his sword; "the secret, villain, or I will force it from you." Before Wild could make any reply, the door was thrown violently open, and Abraham Mendez rushed into the room with a face of the utmost consternation.

"He hash eshaped!" cried the Jew.

"Who? Jack?" exclaimed Jonathan.

"Yesh," replied Abraham. "I vent to de New Prish'n, and on wishitin' his shell vid de turnkey, vot should ve find but de shains on the ground, de vinder broken, and Jack and Agevorth Besh gone."

"Damnation!" cried Jonathan, stamping his foot with uncontrollable rage. "I'd rather have given a thousand pounds than this had happened. But he might have broken out of prison, and yet not got over

the wall of Clerkenwell Bridewell. Did you search the yard, fool?"

"Ve did," replied Abraham; "and found his fine goat and ruffles torn to shtrips on de shpikes near the creat cate. It vosh plain he vent dat vay." Jonathan gave utterance to a torrent of imprecations. While he thus vented his rage, the door again opened, and Quilt Arnold rushed into the room, bleeding, and half-dressed.

"'Sblood! what's this?" cried Jonathan, in the utmost surprise. "Quilt Arnold, is that you?"

"It is, sir," sputtered the janizary. "I've been robbed, maltreated, and nearly murdered by Jack Sheppard."

"By Jack Sheppard!" exclaimed the thief-taker.

"Yes; and I hope you'll take ample vengeance upon him," said Quilt.

"I will, when I catch him, rely on it," rejoined Wild.

"You needn't go far to do that," returned Quilt; "there he stands."

"Ay, here I am," said Jack, throwing off his hat and wig, and marching towards the group, amongst whom there was a general movement of surprise at his audacity. "Sir Rowland, I salute you as your nephew."

"Back, villain!" said the knight haughtily. "I disown you. The whole story of your relationship is a fabrication."

"Time will show," replied Jack with equal haughtiness. "But, however it may turn out, I disown *you*."

"Well, Jack," said Jonathan, who had looked at him with surprise, not unmixed with admiration, "you are a bold and clever fellow, I must allow. Were I not Jonathan Wild, I'd be Jack Sheppard. I'm almost sorry I've sworn to hang you; but it can't be helped. I'm a slave to my word. Were I to let you go, you'd say I feared you. Besides, you've secrets which must

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not be disclosed. Nab and Quilt to the door! Jack, you are my prisoner."

"And you flatter yourself you can detain me?" laughed Jack.

"At least I'll try," replied Jonathan sarcastically. "You must be a cleverer lad than even *I* take you for, if you get out of this place."

"What ho! Blueskin!" shouted Jack.

"Here I am, captain," cried a voice from without. And the door was suddenly thrown open, and the two janizaries felled to the ground by the strong arm of the stalwart robber.

"Your boast, you see, was a little premature, Mr. Wild," said Sheppard. "Adieu, my worthy uncle. Fortunately, I've secured the proof of my birth."

"Confusion!" thundered Wild. "Close the doors below! Loose the dogs! Curses!—they don't hear me! I'll ring the alarum-bell." And he raised his arm with the intention of executing his purpose, when a ball from Jack's pistol passed through the back of his hand, shattering the limb. "Aha! my lad!" he cried, without appearing to regard the pain of the wound, "now I'll show you no quarter." And with the uninjured hand, he drew a pistol, which he fired, but without effect, at Jack.

"Fly, captain, fly!" vociferated Blueskin; "I shan't be able to keep these devils down. Fly! They shall knock me on the head—curse 'em!—before they shall touch you."

"Come along!" cried Jack, darting through the door. "The key's on the outside—quick!—quick!"

Instantly alive to this chance, Blueskin broke away. Two shots were fired at him by Jonathan; one of which passed through his hat, and the other through the fleshy part of his arm; but he made good his retreat. The door was closed—locked—and the pair were heard descending the stairs.

"Hell's curses!" roared Jonathan. "They'll escape. Not a moment is to be lost."

So saying, he took hold of a ring in the floor, and disclosed a flight of steps, down which he hurried, followed by the janizaries. This means of communication instantly brought them to the lobby; but Jack and his companion were already gone. Jonathan threw open the street door. Upon the pavement near the court lay the porter, who had been prostrated by a blow from the butt-end of a pistol. The man, who was just able to move, pointed towards Giltspur Street. Jonathan looked in that direction, and beheld the fugitives riding off in triumph.

"To-night it is *their* turn," said Jonathan, binding up his wounded fingers with a handkerchief. "To-morrow it will be *mine*."

VI

Winifred receives Two Proposals.

THE tragical affair at Dollis Hill, it need scarcely be said, was a dreadful blow to the family. Mr. Wood bore up with great fortitude against the shock, attended the inquest, delivered his evidence with composure, and gave directions afterwards for the funeral, which took place on the day but one following—Sunday.

As soon, however, as the last solemn rites were over, and the remains of the unfortunate woman committed to their final resting-place in Willesden churchyard, his firmness completely deserted him, and he sank beneath the weight of his affliction. It was fortunate that by this time Winifred had so far recovered as to be able to afford her father the best and only solace that, under the circumstances, he could have received—her personal attentions.

The necessity which had previously existed, of leaving the ghastly evidence of the murderous deed undisturbed—the presence of the mangled corpse—the bustle of the inquest, at which her attendance was required—all these circumstances produced a harrowing effect upon the young girl's imagination.

But when all was over, a sorrowful calm succeeded, and if not free from grief, she was tranquil. As to Thames, though deeply and painfully affected by the horrible occurrence that had marked his return to his old friends, he was yet able to control his feelings, and devote himself to the alleviation of the distress of the more immediate sufferers by the calamity.

It was Sunday evening—a soft, delicious evening, and from the happy, *cheerful* look of the house, none would have dreamed of the dismal tragedy so lately acted within its walls. The birds were singing blithely amid the trees—the lowing of the cows resounded from the yard—a delicious perfume from the garden was wafted through the open window—at a distance, the church-bells of Willesden were heard tolling for evening service.

All these things spoke of peace; but there are seasons when the pleasantest external influences have a depressing effect on the mind, by painfully recalling past happiness. So, at least, thought one of two persons who were seated together in a small back-parlour of the house at Dollis Hill. She was a lovely girl, attired in deep mourning, and having an expression of profound sorrow on her charming features. Her companion was a portly, handsome man, also dressed in a full suit of the deepest mourning, with the finest of lace at his bosom and wrists, and a sword in a black sheath by his side. These persons were Mr. Kneebone and Winifred.

The funeral, it has just been said, took place on that day. Amongst others who attended the sad

ceremony was Mr. Kneebone. Conceiving himself called upon, as the intimate friend of the deceased, to pay this last tribute of respect to her memory, he appeared as one of the chief mourners. Overcome by his affliction, Mr. Wood had retired to his own room, where he had just summoned Thames. Much to her annoyance, therefore, Winifred was left alone with the woollen-draper, who, following up a maxim of his own, "that nothing was gained by too much bashfulness," determined to profit by the opportunity. He had only been prevented, indeed, by a fear of Mrs. Wood, from pressing his suit long ago. This obstacle removed, he thought he might now make the attempt. Happen what might, he could not be in a worse position.

"We have had a sad loss, my dear Winifred," he began—"for I must use the privilege of an old friend, and address you by that familiar name—we have had a sad loss in the death of your lamented parent, whose memory I shall for ever revere."

Winifred's eyes filled with tears. This was not exactly what the woollen-draper desired. So he resolved to try another tack.

"What a very remarkable thing it is," he observed, applying to his snuff-box, "that Thames Darrell, whom we all supposed dead"—Kneebone in his heart sincerely wished he *had* been so—"should turn out to be alive after all. Strange I shouldn't know him when he called on me."

"It *is* strange," replied Winifred artlessly. "*I* knew him at once."

"Of course," rejoined Kneebone, a little maliciously; "but that's easily accounted for. May I be permitted, as a very old and very dear friend of your lamented parent, whose loss I shall ever deplore, to ask you one question?"

"Undoubtedly," replied Winifred.

"And you will answer it frankly?"

"Certainly."

"Now for it," thought the woollen-draper. "I shall, at least, ascertain how the land lies. Well, then, my dear," he added aloud, "do you still entertain the strong attachment you did to Captain Darrell?"

Winifred's cheeks glowed with blushes, and fixing her eyes, which flashed with resentment, upon the questioner, she said—

"I have promised to answer your question, and I will do so. I love him as a brother."

"*Only* as a brother?" persisted Kneebone.

If Winifred remained silent, her looks would have disarmed a person of less assurance than the woollen-draper.

"If you knew how much importance I attach to your answer," he continued passionately, "you would not refuse me one. Were Captain Darrell to offer you his hand, would you accept it?"

"Your impertinence deserves very different treatment, sir," said Winifred; "but to put an end to this annoyance, I will tell you—I would not."

"And why not?" asked Kneebone eagerly.

"I will not submit to be thus interrogated," said Winifred angrily.

"In the name of your lamented parent, whose memory I shall for ever revere, I implore you to answer me," urged Kneebone. "Why—why would you not accept him?"

"Because our positions are different," replied Winifred, who could not resist this appeal to her feelings.

"You are a paragon of prudence and discretion," rejoined the woollen-draper, drawing his chair closer to hers. "Disparity of rank is ever productive of unhappiness in the married state. When Captain Darrell's birth is ascertained, I've no doubt he'll turn

out a nobleman's son. At least, I hope so, for his sake as well as my own," he added mentally. "He has quite the air of one. And now, my angel, that I am acquainted with your sentiments on this subject, I shall readily fulfil a promise which I made to your lamented parent, whose loss I shall ever deplore."

"A promise to my mother?" said Winifred unsuspiciously.

"Yes, my angel, to *her*—rest her soul! She extorted it from me, and bound me by a solemn oath to fulfil it."

"Oh! name it."

"You are a party concerned. Promise me that you will not disobey the injunctions of her whose memory we must both of us ever revere. Promise me."

"If in my power—certainly. But, what is it? What *did* you promise?"

"To offer you my heart, my hand, my life," replied Kneebone, falling at her feet.

"Sir!" exclaimed Winifred, rising.

"Inequality of rank can be no bar to *our* union," continued Kneebone. "Heaven be praised, *I* am not the son of a nobleman."

In spite of her displeasure, Winifred could not help smiling at the absurdity of this address. Taking this for encouragement, her suitor proceeded still more extravagantly. Seizing her hand, he covered it with kisses.

"Adorable girl!" he cried in the most impassioned tone, and with the most impassioned look he could command. "Adorable girl, I have long loved you to desperation. Your lamented mother, whose loss I shall ever deplore, perceived my passion, and encouraged it. Would she were alive to back my suit!"

"This is beyond all endurance," said Winifred, striving to withdraw her hand. "Leave me, sir; I insist."

"Never!" rejoined Kneebone, with increased ardour

—“never, till I receive from your own lips the answer which is to make me the happiest or the most miserable of mankind. Hear me, adorable girl! You know not the extent of my devotion. No mercenary consideration influences me. Love—admiration for your matchless beauty alone sways me. Let your father, if he chooses, leave all his wealth to his adopted son. I care not. Possessed of *you*, I shall have a treasure such as kings could not boast.”

“Pray cease this nonsense,” said Winifred, “and quit the room, or I will call for assistance.”

At this juncture, the door opened, and Thames entered the room. As the woollen-draper’s back was towards him, he did not perceive him, but continued his passionate addresses.

“Call as you please, beloved girl,” he cried, “I will not stir till I am answered. You say that you only love Captain Darrell as a brother——”

“Mr. Kneebone!”

“That you would not accept him were he to offer——”

“Be silent, sir!”

“He, then,” continued the woollen-draper, “is no longer considered——”

“How, sir,” said Thames, advancing; “what is the meaning of your reference to my name? Have you dared to insult this lady? If so——”

“Insult her!” replied Kneebone, rising, and endeavouring to hide his embarrassment under a look of defiance. “Far from it, sir. I have made her an honourable proposal of marriage, in compliance with the request of her lamented parent, whose memory——

“Dare to utter that falsehood in my hearing again, scoundrel,” interrupted Thames fiercely, “and I will put it out of your power to repeat the offence. Leave the room! leave the house, sir! and enter it again at your peril.”

“I shall do neither, sir,” replied Kneebone, “unless

I am requested by this lady to withdraw—in which case I shall comply with her request. And you have to thank her presence, hot-headed boy, that I do not chastise your insolence as it deserves.”

“Go, Mr. Kneebone—pray go!” implored Winifred. “Thames, I entreat——”

“Your wishes are my laws, beloved girl,” replied Kneebone, bowing profoundly. “Captain Darrell,” he added sternly, “you shall hear from me.”

“When you please, sir,” said Thames coldly.

And the woollen-draper departed.

“What is all this, dear Winny?” inquired Thames, as soon as they were alone.

“Nothing—nothing,” she answered, bursting into tears. “Don’t ask me about it now.”

“Winny,” said Thames tenderly, “something which that self-sufficient fool has said has so far done me a service in enabling me to speak upon a subject which I have long had upon my lips, but have not had courage to utter.”

“Thames!”

“You seem to doubt my love,” he continued—“you seem to think that change of circumstances may produce some change in my affections. Hear me then, now, before I take one step to establish my origin, or secure my rights. Whatever those rights may be, whoever I am, my heart is yours. Do you accept it?”

“Dear Thames!”

“Forgive this ill-timed avowal of my love. But answer me. Am I mistaken? Is your heart mine?”

“It is—it is; and has ever been,” replied Winifred, falling upon his neck.

Lovers’ confidences should be respected. We close the chapter.

VII

Jack Sheppard warns Thames Darrell.

ON the following night—namely, Monday—the family assembled together, for the first time since the fatal event, in the chamber to which Thames had been introduced on his arrival at Dollis Hill. As this had been Mrs. Wood's favourite sitting-room, and her image was so intimately associated with it, neither the carpenter nor his daughter could muster courage to enter it before.

Determined, however, to conquer the feeling as soon as possible, Wood had given orders to have the evening meal served there; but, notwithstanding all his good resolutions, upon his first entrance he had much ado to maintain his self-command. His wife's portrait had been removed from the walls, and the place it had occupied was only to be known by the cord by which it had been suspended. The very blank, however, affected him more deeply than if it had been left. Then a handkerchief was thrown over the cage, to prevent the bird from singing; it was *her* favourite canary. The flowers upon the mantelshelf were withered and drooping—*she* had gathered them. All these circumstances—slight in themselves, but powerful in their effect—touched the heart of the widowed carpenter, and added to his depression.

Supper was over. It had been discussed in silence. The cloth was removed, and Wood, drawing the table as near the window as possible—for it was getting dusk—put on his spectacles and opened that sacred volume from which the best consolation in affliction is derived, and left the lovers—for such they may now be fairly termed—to their own conversation.

Having already expressed our determination not to betray any confidences of this sort, which, however interesting to the parties concerned, could not possibly be so to others, we shall omit also the "love passages," and proceeding to such topics as may have general interest, take up the discourse at the point when Thames Darrell expressed his determination of starting for Manchester as soon as Jack Sheppard's examination had taken place.

"I am surprised we have received no summons for attendance to-day," he remarked; "perhaps the other robber may be secured."

"Or Jack have escaped," remarked Winny.

"I don't think that's likely. But, this sad affair disposed of, I will not rest till I have avenged my murdered parent."

"*'The avenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer,'*" said Wood, who was culling for himself certain texts from the Scriptures.

"It is the voice of inspiration," said Thames; "and I receive it as a solemn command. The villain has enjoyed his security too long."

"*'Bloody and deceitful men shall not live half their days,'*" said Wood, reading aloud another passage.

"And yet, *he* has been spared thus long; perhaps with a wise purpose," rejoined Thames. "But, though the storm has spared him, *I* will not."

"*'No doubt,'*" said Wood, who had again turned over the leaves of the sacred volume—"no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he escaped the seas, yet vengeance suffereth not to live."

"No feelings of consanguinity shall stay my vengeance," said Thames sternly. "I will have no satisfaction but his life."

"*'Thou shalt take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer which is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death,'*" said Wood, referring to another text.

"Do not steel your heart against him, dear Thames," interposed Winifred.

"*'And thine eye shall not pity,'*" said her father in a tone of rebuke; "*'but life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.'*"

As these words were delivered by the carpenter with stern emphasis, a female servant entered the room and stated that a gentleman was at the door who wished to speak with Captain Darrell on business of urgent importance.

"With me?" said Thames. "Who is it?"

"He didn't give his name, sir," replied the maid; "but he's a young gentleman."

"Don't go near him, dear Thames," said Winifred; "he may have some ill intention."

"Pshaw!" cried Thames. "What! refuse to see a person who desires to speak with me. Say I will come to him."

"Law! miss," observed the maid, "there's nothing mischievous in the person's appearance, I'm sure. He's as nice and civil-spoken a gentleman as need be; by the same token," she added in an undertone, "that he gave me a span new crown piece."

"*'The thief cometh in the night, and the troop of robbers spoileth without,'*" said Wood, who had a text for every emergency.

"Lor' ha' mussy, sir—how you *do* talk," said the woman; "this is no robber, I'm sure. I should have known at a glance if it was. He's more like a lord than——"

As she spoke steps were heard approaching; the door was thrown open, and a young man marched boldly into the room.

The intruder was handsomely, even richly, attired in a scarlet riding-suit, embroidered with gold; a broad belt, to which a hanger was attached, crossed his shoulders; his boots rose above his knee, and he

carried a laced hat in his hand. Advancing to the middle of the chamber, he halted, drew himself up, and fixed his dark expressive eyes on Thames Darrell. His appearance excited the greatest astonishment and consternation amid the group. Winifred screamed. Thames sprang to his feet, and half drew his sword, while Wood, removing his spectacles to assure himself that his eyes did not deceive him, exclaimed in a tone and with a look that betrayed the extremity of surprise—

“Jack Sheppard!”

“Jack Sheppard!” echoed the maid. “Is this Jack Sheppard? Oh, la! I’m undone! We shall all have our throats cut! Oh! oh!”

And she rushed screaming into the passage, where she fell down in a fit.

The occasion of all this confusion and dismay, meanwhile, remained perfectly motionless; his figure erect, and with somewhat of dignity in his demeanour. He kept his keen eyes steadily fixed on Thames, as if awaiting to be addressed.

“Your audacity passes belief,” cried the latter, as soon as his surprise would allow him utterance. “If you have contrived to break out of your confinement, villain, this is the last place where you ought to show yourself.”

“And therefore the first I would visit,” replied Jack boldly. “But pardon my intrusion. I was *resolved* to see you. And fearing you might not come to me, I forced my way hither, even with certainty of discomposing your friends.”

“Well, villain!” replied Thames, “I know not the motive of your visit. But if you have come to surrender yourself to justice, it is well. You cannot depart hence.”

“Cannot?” echoed Jack, a slight smile crossing his features. “But let that pass. My motive in coming

hither is to serve you, and save your life. If you choose to requite me by detaining me, you are at liberty to do so. *I* shall make no defence. That I am not ignorant of the reward offered for my capture this will show," he added, taking a large placard headed "*Murder*" from his pocket, and throwing it on the floor. "My demeanour ought to convince you that I came with no hostile intention. And, to show you I have no intention of flying, I will myself close and lock the door. There is the key. Are you now satisfied?"

"No," interposed Wood furiously; "I shall never be satisfied till I see you hanged on the highest gibbet at Tyburn."

"A time may come when you will be gratified, Mr. Wood," replied Jack calmly.

"May come!—it *will* come! it *shall* come!" cried the carpenter, shaking his hand menacingly at him. "I have some difficulty in preventing myself from becoming your executioner. Oh! that I should have nursed such a viper!"

"Hear me, sir," said Jack.

"No, I won't hear you, murderer," rejoined Wood.

"I am no murderer," replied Sheppard. "I had no thought of injuring your wife, and would have died rather than commit so foul a crime."

"Think not to delude me, audacious wretch," cried the carpenter. "Even if you are not a principal, you are an accessory. If you had not brought your companion here, it would not have happened. But you shall swing, rascal—you shall swing."

"My conscience acquits me of all share in the offence," replied Jack humbly. "But the past is irremediable, and I did not come hither to exculpate myself. I came to save *your* life," he added, turning to Thames.

"I was not aware it was in danger," rejoined Darrell.

"Then you ought to be thankful to me for the warning. You *are* in danger."

"From some of your associates."

"From your uncle, from *my* uncle—Sir Rowland Trenchard."

"What means this idle boasting, villain?" said Thames. "*Your* uncle—Sir Rowland?"

"It is no idle boasting," replied the other. "You are cousin to the housebreaker, Jack Sheppard."

"If it were so, he would have great reason to be proud of the relationship, truly," observed Wood, shrugging his shoulders.

"It is easy to make an assertion like this," said Thames contemptuously.

"And equally easy to prove it," replied Jack, giving him the paper he had abstracted from Wild. "Read that."

Thames hastily cast his eyes over it, and transferred it, with a look of incredulity, to Wood.

"Gracious Heavens! this is more wonderful than all the rest," cried the carpenter, rubbing his eyes.

"Thames, this is no forgery."

"You believe it, father?"

"From the bottom of my heart. I always thought Mrs. Sheppard superior to her station."

"So did I," said Winifred. "Let me look at the paper."

"Poor soul!—poor soul!" groaned Wood, brushing the tears from his vision. "Well, I'm glad she's spared this. Oh! Jack, Jack, you've much to answer for!"

"I have, indeed," replied Sheppard, in a tone of contrition.

"If this document is correct," continued Wood, "and I am persuaded it is so, you are as unfortunate as wicked. See what your misconduct has deprived you of—see what you might have been. This is retribution."

"I feel it," replied Jack, in a tone of agony; "and

I feel it more on my poor mother's account than my own."

"She has suffered enough for you," said Wood.

"She has, she has," said Jack, in a broken voice.

"Weep on, reprobate," cried the carpenter, a little softened. "Those tears will do you good."

"Do not distress him, dear father," said Winifred; "he suffers deeply, Oh, Jack! repent, while it is yet time, of your evil conduct. I will pray for you."

"I cannot repent—I cannot pray," replied Jack, recovering his hardened demeanour. "I should never have been what I am but for you."

"How so?" inquired Winifred.

"I loved you," replied Jack. "Don't start—it is over now—I loved you, I say, as a boy, *hopelessly*, and it made me desperate. And now I find, when it is too late, that I *might* have deserved you—that I am as well born as Thames Darrell. But I mustn't think of these things, or I shall grow mad. I have said your life is in danger, Thames. Do not slight my warning. Sir Rowland Trenchard is aware of your return to England. I saw him last night at Jonathan Wild's after my escape from the New Prison. He had just arrived from Manchester, whence he had been summoned by that treacherous thief-taker. I overheard them planning your assassination. It is to take place to-night."

"Oh, Heavens!" screamed Winifred, while her father lifted up his hands in silent horror.

"And when I further tell you," continued Jack, "that, after yourself and my mother, *I* am the next heir to the estates of my grandfather, Sir Montacute Trenchard, you will perhaps own that my caution is sufficiently disinterested."

"Could I credit your wild story, I might do so," returned Thames, with a look of perplexity.

"Here are Jonathan Wild's written instructions to Quilt Arnold," rejoined Sheppard, producing the pocket-

book he had found in the janizary's clothes. "This letter will vouch for me that a communication has taken place between your enemies."

Thames glanced at the despatch, and, after a moment's reflection inquired, "In what way is the attempt upon my life to be made?"

"That I couldn't ascertain," replied Jack; "but I advise you to be upon your guard. For aught I know, they may be in the neighbourhood at this moment."

"Here!" ejaculated Wood, with a look of alarm. "Oh Lord! I hope not."

"This I do know," continued Jack—"Jonathan Wild superintends the attack."

"Jonathan Wild!" repeated the carpenter, trembling. "Then it's all over with us. Oh, dear!—how sorry I am I ever left Wych Street. We may be all murdered in this unprotected place, and nobody be the wiser."

"There's some one in the garden at this moment," cried Jack; "I saw a face at the window."

"Where—where?" cried Thames.

"Don't stir," replied Jack. "I will at once convince you of the truth of my assertions, and ascertain whether the enemy is really at hand."

So saying, he advanced towards the window, threw open the sash, and called out in the voice of Thames Darrell—

"Who's there?"

He was answered by a shot from a pistol. The ball passed over his head, and lodged in the ceiling.

"I was right," replied Jack, returning as coolly as if nothing had happened. "It is Jonathan. Your uncle—*our* uncle is with him. I saw them both."

"May I trust you?" cried Thames eagerly.

"You may," replied Jack. "I'll fight for you to the last gasp."

"Follow me, then," cried Thames, drawing his sword, and springing through the window.

"To the world's end," answered Jack, darting after him.

"Thames! Thames!" cried Winifred, rushing to the window. "He will be murdered!—Help!"

"My child! my love!" cried Wood, dragging her forcibly back.

Two shots were fired, and presently the clashing of swords was heard below. After some time, the scuffle grew more and more distant, until nothing could be heard. Wood, meanwhile, had summoned his men-servants, and having armed them with such weapons as could be found, they proceeded to the garden, where the first object they encountered was Thames Darrell extended on the ground, and weltering in his blood. Of Jack Sheppard or the assailants they could not discover a single trace. As the body was borne to the house in the arms of the farming-men, Mr. Wood fancied he heard the exulting laugh of Jonathan Wild.

VIII

Old Bedlam.

WHEN Thames Darrell and Jack Sheppard sprang through the window, they were instantly assailed by Wild, Trenchard, and their attendants. Jack attacked Jonathan with such fury, that he drove him into a shrubbery, and might perhaps have come off the victor, if his foot had not slipped as he made a desperate lunge. In this state it would have been all over with him, as, being stunned with the fall, it was some moments before he could recover himself, if another party had not unexpectedly come to his rescue. This was Blueskin, who burst through the trees, and, sword in hand, assaulted the thief-taker. As soon as Jack gained his legs, he

perceived Blueskin lying, as he thought, dead, in the plantation, with a severe cut across his temples, and while he was stooping to assist him, he heard groans at a little distance. Hastening in the direction of the sound, he discovered Thames Darrell stretched upon the ground.

"Are you hurt, Thames?" asked Jack anxiously.

"Not dangerously, I hope," returned Thames; "but fly—save yourself."

"Where are the assassins?" cried Sheppard.

"Gone," replied the wounded man. "They imagine their work is done. But I may yet live to thwart them."

"I will carry you to the house, or fetch Mr. Wood," urged Jack.

"No, no," rejoined Thames; "fly—or I will not answer for your safety. If you desire to please me you will go."

"And leave you thus?" rejoined Jack. "I cannot do it."

"Go, I insist," cried Thames, "or take the consequences upon yourself. I cannot protect you."

Thus urged, Jack reluctantly departed. Hastening to the spot where he had tied his horse to a tree, he vaulted into the saddle, and rode off across the fields—for he was fearful of encountering the hostile party—till he reached the Edgware Road. Arrived at Paddington, he struck across Marylebone Fields—for as yet the New Road was undreamt of—and never moderated his speed until he reached the city. His destination was the New Mint. At this place of refuge, situated in the heart of Wapping, near the river-side, he arrived in less than an hour, in a complete state of exhaustion.

In consequence of the infamous abuse of its liberties, an Act for the entire suppression of the Old Mint was passed in the ninth year of the reign of George the First, not many months before the date of the present

epoch of this history ; and as, after the destruction of Whitefriars, which took place in the reign of Charles the Second, owing to the protection afforded by its inmates to the Levellers and Fifth-monarchy-men, when the inhabitants of Alsatia crossed the water, and settled themselves in the borough of Southwark—so now, driven out of their fastnesses, they again migrated, and recrossing the Thames, settled in Wapping, in a miserable quarter between Artichoke Lane and Nightingale Lane, which they termed the New Mint. Ousted from his old retreat, the Cross Shovels, Baptist Kettleby opened another tavern, conducted upon the same plan as the former, which he denominated the Seven Cities of Refuge. His subjects, however, were no longer entirely under his control ; and though he managed to enforce some little attention to his commands, it was evident his authority was waning fast. Aware that they would not be allowed to remain long unmolested, the New Minters conducted themselves so outrageously, and with such extraordinary insolence, that measures were at this time being taken for their effectual suppression.

To the Seven Cities of Refuge Jack proceeded. Having disposed of his steed and swallowed a glass of brandy, without taking any other refreshment, he threw himself on a couch, where he sank at once into a heavy slumber. When he awoke it was late in the day, and he was surprised to find Blueskin seated by his bedside, watching over him with a drawn sword on his knee, a pistol in each hand, and a blood-stained cloth bound across his brow.

“Don’t disturb yourself,” said his follower, motioning him to keep still ; “it’s all right.”

“What time is it ?” inquired Jack.

“Past noon,” replied Blueskin. “I didn’t awake you, because you seemed tired.”

“How did you escape ?” asked Sheppard, who, as

he shook off his slumber, began to recall the events of the previous night.

"Oh, easily enough," rejoined the other. "I suppose I must have been senseless for some time; for on coming to myself, I found this gash in my head, and the ground covered with blood. However, no one had discovered me, so I contrived to drag myself to my horse. I thought if you were living, and not captured, I should find you here—and I was right. I kept watch over you, for fear of a surprise on the part of Jonathan. But what's to be done?"

"The first thing I do," replied Jack, "will be to visit my poor mother in Bedlam."

"You'd better take care of your mother's son instead," rejoined Blueskin. "It's running a great risk."

"Risk, or no risk, I shall go," replied Jack. "Jonathan has threatened to do her some mischief. I am resolved to see her without delay, and ascertain if it's possible to remove her."

"It's a hopeless job," grumbled Blueskin, "and harm will come of it. What are you to do with a mad mother at a time when you need all your wits to take care of yourself?"

"Don't concern yourself further about me," returned Jack. "Once for all, I shall go."

"Won't you take me?"

"No; you must await my return here."

"Then I must wait a long time," grumbled Blueskin. "You'll never return."

"We shall see," replied Jack. "But, if I should *not* return, take this purse to Edgeworth Bess. You'll find her at Black Mary's Hole."

And, having partaken of a hasty breakfast, he set out. Taking his way along East Smithfield, mounting little Tower Hill, and threading the Minories and Houndsditch, he arrived, without accident or molestation, at Moorfields.

Old Bethlehem, or Bedlam—every trace of which has been swept away, and the hospital for lunatics removed to Saint George's Fields—was a vast and magnificent structure. Erected in Moorfields in 1675, upon the model of the Tuileries, it is said Louis the Fourteenth was so incensed at the insult offered to his palace, that he had a counterpart of St. James's built for offices of the meanest description. The size and grandeur of the edifice, indeed, drew down the ridicule of several of the wits of the age: by one of whom—the facetious Tom Brown—it was said, “Bedlam is a pleasant place, and abounds with amusements: the first of which is the building, so stately a fabric for persons wholly insensible of the beauty and use of it; the outside being a perfect mockery of the inside, and admitting of two amusing queries—Whether the persons that ordered the building of it, or those that inhabited it, were the maddest? and, whether the name and thing be not as disagreeable as harp and harrow?” By another—the no less facetious Ned Ward—it was termed, “A costly college for a crack-brained society, raised in a mad age, when the chief of the city were in a great danger of losing their senses, and so contrived it the more noble for their own reception; or they would never have flung away so much money to so foolish a purpose.” The cost of the building exceeded seventeen thousand pounds. However the taste of the architecture may be questioned, which was the formal French style of the period, the general effect was imposing. Including the wings, it presented a frontage of five hundred and forty feet. Each wing had a small cupola; and in the centre of the pile rose a larger dome, surmounted by a gilded ball and vane. The asylum was approached by a broad gravel walk, leading through a garden edged on either side by a stone balustrade, and shaded by tufted trees. A wide terrace then led to large iron

gates, over which were placed the two celebrated figures of Raving and Melancholy Madness, executed by the elder Cibber, and commemorated by Pope in the *Dunciad*, in the well-known lines—

Close to those walls where Folly holds her throne,
And laughs to think Monroe would take her down,
Where, o'er the gates, by his famed father's hand,
Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand.

Internally, it was divided by two long galleries, one over the other. These galleries were separated in the middle by iron gates. The wards on the right were occupied by male patients, on the left by the females. In the centre of the upper gallery was a spacious saloon, appropriated to the governors of the asylum. But the besetting evil of the place, and that which drew down the severest censures of the writers above mentioned, was that this spot—which of all others should have been most free from such intrusion—was made a public exhibition. There all the loose characters thronged, assignations were openly made, and the spectators diverted themselves with the vagaries of its miserable inhabitants.

Entering the outer gate, and traversing the broad gravel walk before mentioned, Jack ascended the steps, and was admitted, on feeing the porter, by another iron gate, into the hospital. Here he was almost stunned by the deafening clamour resounding on all sides. Some of the lunatics were rattling their chains; some shrieking; some singing; some beating with frantic violence against the doors. Altogether, it was the most dreadful noise he had ever heard. Amidst it all, however, there were several light-hearted and laughing groups walking from cell to cell, to whom all this misery appeared matter of amusement.

The doors of several of the wards were thrown open for these parties, and as Jack passed, he could not

help glancing at the wretched inmates. Here was a poor half-naked creature with a straw crown on his head, and a wooden sceptre in his hand, seated on the ground with all the dignity of a monarch on his throne. There was a mad musician, seemingly rapt in admiration of the notes he was extracting from a child's violin. Here was a terrific figure gnashing his teeth, and howling like a wild beast—there a lover, with hands clasped together, and eyes turned passionately upward. In this cell was a huntsman, who had fractured his skull while hunting, and was perpetually hallooing after the hounds—in that, the most melancholy of all, the grinning, gibbering lunatic, the realisation of “moody madness, laughing wild.”

Hastening from this heartrending spectacle, Jack soon reached the grating that divided the men's compartment from that appropriated to the women. Inquiring for Mrs. Sheppard, a matron offered to conduct him to her cell.

“You will find her quiet enough to-day, sir,” observed the woman, as they walked along; “but she has been very outrageous latterly. Her nurse says she may live some time; but she seems to me to be sinking fast.”

“Heaven help her!” sighed Jack. “I hope not.”

“Her release would be a mercy,” pursued the matron. “Oh! sir, if you'd seen her as I've seen her, you'd not wish her a continuance of misery.”

As Jack made no reply, the woman proceeded.

“They say her son's taken at last, and is to be hanged. I'm glad of it, I'm sure; for it's all owing to him his poor mother's here. See what crime does, sir. Those who act wickedly bring misery on all connected with them. And so gentle as the poor creature is, when she's not in her wild fits—it would melt a heart of stone to see her. She will cry for days and nights together. If Jack Sheppard could behold his mother

in this state, he'd have a lesson he'd never forget—ay, and a severer one than even the hangman could read him. Hardened as he may be, that would touch him. But he has never been near her—never.”

Rambling in this way, the matron at length came to a halt, and taking out a key, pointed to a door, and said, “This is Mrs. Sheppard’s ward, sir.”

“Leave us together, my good woman,” said Jack, putting a guinea into her hand.

“As long as you please, sir,” answered the matron, dropping a curtsy. “There, sir,” she added, unlocking the door, “you can go in. Don’t be frightened of her. She’s not mischievous—and besides, she’s chained, and can’t reach you.”

So saying she retired, and Jack entered the cell.

Prepared as he was for a dreadful shock, and with his nerves strung to endure it, Jack absolutely recoiled before the appalling object that met his gaze. Cowering in a corner upon a heap of straw sat his unfortunate mother, the complete wreck of what she had been. Her eyes glistened in the darkness—for light was only admitted through a small grated window—like flames, and, as she fixed them on him, their glances seemed to penetrate his very soul. A piece of old blanket was fastened across her shoulders, and she had no other clothing except a petticoat. Her arms and feet were uncovered, and of almost skeleton thinness. Her features were meagre and ghastly white, and had the fixed and horrible stamp of insanity. Her head had been shaved, and around it was swathed a piece of rag, in which a few straws were stuck. Her thin fingers were armed with nails as long as the talons of a bird. A chain, riveted to an iron belt encircling her waist, bound her to the wall. The cell in which she was confined was about six feet long and four wide; the walls were scored all over with fantastic designs, snatches of poetry, short sentences, and names,

—the work of its former occupants and of its present inmate.

When Jack entered the cell, she was talking to herself in the muttering, unconnected way peculiar to her distracted condition; but after her eye had rested on him some time, the fixed expression of her features relaxed, and a smile crossed them. This smile was more harrowing even than her former rigid look.

"You are an angel," she cried, with a look beaming with delight.

"Rather a devil," groaned her son, "to have done this."

"You are an angel, I say," continued the poor maniac; "and my Jack would have been like you, if he had lived. But he died when he was a child—long ago—long ago—long ago."

"Would he had done so!" cried Jack.

"Old Van told me if he grew up he would be hanged. He showed me a black mark under his ear, where the noose would be tied. And so I'll tell you what I did——"

And she burst into a laugh that froze Jack's blood in his veins.

"What did you do?" he asked, in a broken voice.

"I strangled him—ha! ha! ha!—strangled him while he was at my breast—ha! ha!" And then, with a sudden and fearful change of look, she added, "That's what has driven me mad. I killed my child to save him from the gallows—oh! oh! One man hanged in a family is enough. If I'd not gone mad, they would have hanged me."

"Poor soul!" ejaculated her son.

"I'll tell you a dream I had last night," continued the unfortunate being. "I was at Tyburn. There was a gallows erected, and a great mob round it—thousands of people, and all with white faces like

corpses. In the midst of them there was a cart with a man in it—and that man was Jack—my son Jack—they were going to hang him. And opposite to him, with a book in his hand—but it couldn't be a prayer-book—sat Jonathan Wild, in a parson's cassock and band. I knew him in spite of his dress. And when they came to the gallows, Jack leaped out of the cart, and the hangman tied up Jonathan instead—ha! ha! How the mob shouted and huzzaed—and I shouted too—ha! ha! ha!”

“Mother!” cried Jack, unable to endure this agonising scene longer. “Don't you know me, mother?”

“Ah!” shrieked Mrs. Sheppard. “What's that?—Jack's voice!”

“It is,” replied her son.

“The ceiling is breaking! the floor is opening! he is coming to me!” cried the unhappy woman.

“He stands before you,” rejoined her son.

“Where?” she cried. “I can't see him—where is he?”

“Here,” answered Jack.

“Are you his ghost, then?”

“No—no,” answered Jack. “I am your most unhappy son.”

“Let me touch you, then; let me feel if you are really flesh and blood,” cried the poor maniac, creeping towards him on all fours. Jack did not advance to meet her. He could not move; but stood like one stupefied, with his hands clasped together, and eyes almost starting out of their sockets, fixed upon his unfortunate parent.

“Come to me!” cried the poor maniac, who had crawled as far as the chain would permit her—“come to me!” she cried, extending her thin arm towards him. Jack fell on his knees beside her.

“Who are you?” inquired Mrs. Sheppard, passing

her hands over his face, and gazing at him with a look that made him shudder.

"Your son," replied Jack, "your miserable, repentant son."

"It is false," cried Mrs. Sheppard. "You are not. Jack was not half your age when he died. They buried him in Willesden churchyard after the robbery."

"O God!" cried Jack, "she does not know me. Mother—dear mother," he added, clasping her in his arms. "Look at me again."

"Off," she exclaimed, breaking from his embrace with a scream. "Don't touch me. I'll be quiet. I'll not speak of Jack or Jonathan. I won't dig their graves with my nails. Don't strip me quite. Leave me my blanket! I'm very cold at night. Or, if you must take off my clothes, don't dash cold water on my head. It throbs cruelly."

"Horror!" cried Jack.

"Don't scourge me," she cried, trying to hide herself in the farthest corner of the cell. "The lash cuts to the bone. I can't bear it. Spare me, and I'll be quiet—quiet—quiet!"

"Mother!" said Jack, advancing towards her.

"Off!" she cried, with a prolonged and piercing shriek. And she buried herself beneath the straw, which she tossed above her head with the wildest gestures.

"I shall kill her if I stay longer," muttered her son, completely terrified. While he was considering what would be best to do, the poor maniac, over whose bewildered brain another change had come, raised her head from under the straw, and, peeping round the room, asked, in a low voice, "if they were gone."

"Who?" inquired Jack.

"The nurses," she answered.

"Do they treat you ill?" asked her son.

"Hush!" she said, putting her lean fingers to her

lips. "Hush!—come hither, and I'll tell you." Jack approached her. "Sit beside me," continued Mrs. Sheppard. "And now I'll tell you what they do. Stop! we must shut the door, or they'll catch us. See!" she added, tearing the rag from her head—"I had beautiful black hair once. But they cut it all off."

"I shall go mad myself if I listen to her longer," said Jack, attempting to rise. "I must go."

"Don't stir, or they'll chain you to the wall," said his mother, detaining him. "Now, tell me why they brought you here?"

"I came to see you, dear mother!" answered Jack.

"Mother!" she echoed—"mother! why do you call me by that name?"

"Because you are my mother."

"What!" she exclaimed, staring eagerly in his face. "Are you my son? Are you Jack?"

"I am," replied Jack. "Heaven be praised, she knows me at last."

"O Jack!" cried his mother, falling upon his neck, and covering him with kisses.

"Mother—dear mother!" said Jack, bursting into tears.

"You will never leave me," sobbed the poor woman, straining him to her breast.

"Never—never!"

The words were scarcely pronounced, when the door was violently thrown open, and two men appeared at it. They were Jonathan Wild and Quilt Arnold.

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack, starting to his feet.

"Just in time," said the thief-taker. "You are my prisoner, Jack."

"You shall take my life first," rejoined Sheppard.

And, as he was about to put himself into a posture of defence, his mother clasped him in her arms.

"They shall not harm you, my love!" she exclaimed.

The movement was fatal to her son. Taking advan-

tage of his embarrassed position, Jonathan and his assistant rushed upon him and disarmed him.

"Thank you, Mrs. Sheppard," cried the thief-taker, as he slipped a pair of handcuffs over Jack's wrists, "for the help you have given us in capturing your son. Without you we might have had some trouble." Aware, apparently in some degree, of the mistake she had committed, the poor maniac sprang towards him with frantic violence, and planted her long nails in his cheek.

"Keep off, you accursed jade!" roared Jonathan. "Keep off, I say, or——"

And he struck her a violent blow with his clenched hand. The miserable woman staggered, uttered a deep groan, and fell senseless on the straw.

"Devil!" cried Jack, "that blow shall cost you your life."

"It'll not need to be repeated, at all events," replied Jonathan, looking with a smile of malignant satisfaction at the body. "And now—to Newgate."

IX

Old Newgate.

At the beginning of the twelfth century—whether in the reign of Henry the First, or Stephen, is uncertain—a fifth gate was added to the four principal entrances of the city of London; then, it is almost needless to say, surrounded by ramparts, moats, and other defences. This gate, called *Newgate*, "as being latelier built than the rest," continued, for upwards of three hundred years, to be used as a place of imprisonment for felons and trespassers; at the end of which time, having grown old, ruinous, and "horribly loathsome," it was rebuilt and enlarged by the executors of the renowned Sir Richard Whittington, *the* lord mayor of London;

whence it afterwards attained amongst a certain class of students, whose examinations were conducted with some strictness at the Old Bailey, and their highest degrees taken at Hyde Park Corner, the appellation of Whittington's College; or, more briefly, the Whit. It may here be mentioned that this gate, destined to bequeath its name—a name which has since acquired a terrible significance—to every successive structure erected upon its site, was granted, in 1400, by charter, by Henry the Sixth, to the citizens of London, in return for their loyal services, and thenceforth became the common gaol to that city and the county of Middlesex. Nothing material occurred to Newgate, until the memorable year 1666, when it was utterly destroyed by the Great Fire. It is with the building raised after this direful calamity that our history has to deal.

Though by no means so extensive or commodious as the modern prison, Old Newgate was a large and strongly built pile. The body of the edifice stood on the south side of Newgate Street, and projected at the western extremity far into the area opposite Saint Sepulchre's Church. One small wing lay at the north of the gate, where Giltspur Street Compter now stands; and the Press Yard, which was detached from the main building, was situated at the back of Phoenix Court. The south, or principal front, looking *down* the Old Bailey, and not *upon it*, as is the case of the present structure, with its massive walls of roughened freestone—in some places darkened by the smoke, in others blanched by exposure to the weather—its heavy projecting cornice, its unglazed doubly grated windows, its gloomy porch, decorated with fetters, and defended by an enormous iron door, had a stern and striking effect. Over the lodge, upon a dial, was inscribed the appropriate motto, "*Venio sicut fur.*" The gate, which crossed Newgate Street, had a wide arch for carriages, and a postern, on the north side, for foot passengers.

Its architecture was richly ornamental, and resembled the style of a triumphal entrance to a capital, rather than a dungeon, having battlements and hexagonal towers, and being adorned on the western side with a triple range of pilasters of the Tuscan order, amid the intercolumniations of which were niches embellished with statues. The chief of these was a figure of Liberty, with a cat at her feet, in allusion to the supposed origin of the fortunes of its former founder, Sir Richard Whittington. On the right of the postern, against the wall, was affixed a small grating, sustaining the debtors' box; and any pleasure which the passer-by might derive from contemplating the splendid structure above described was damped at beholding the pale faces and squalid figures of the captives across the bars of its strongly grated windows. Some years after the date of this history, an immense ventilator was placed at the top of the gate, with a view of purifying the prison, which, owing to its insufficient space and constantly crowded state, was never free from that dreadful and contagious disorder, now happily unknown, the gaol fever. So frightful, indeed, were the ravages of this malady, to which debtors and felons were alike exposed, that its miserable victims were frequently carried out by cart-loads, and thrown into a pit in the burial-ground of Christchurch, without ceremony.

Old Newgate was divided into three separate prisons—the Master's Side, the Common Side, and the Press Yard. The first of these, situated at the south of the building, with the exception of one ward over the gateway, was allotted to the better class of debtors, whose funds enabled them to defray their chamber-rent, fees, and garnish. The second, comprising the bulk of the gaol, and by many degrees worse in point of accommodation, having several dismal and noisome wards underground, was common both to debtors and malefactors—an association little favourable to the morals

or comforts of the former, who, if they were brought there with any notions of honesty, seldom left with untainted principles. The last—in all respects the best and airiest of the three, standing, as has been before observed, in Phoenix Court, at the rear of the main fabric—was reserved for State offenders, and such persons as chose to submit to the extortionate demands of the keeper: from twenty to five hundred pounds premium, according to the rank and means of the applicant, in addition to a high weekly rent, being required for accommodation in this quarter. Some excuse for this rapacity may perhaps be found in the fact, that five thousand pounds was paid for the purchase of the Press Yard by Mr. Pitt, the then governor of Newgate. This gentleman, tried for high treason, in 1716, on suspicion of aiding Mr. Forster, the rebel general's escape, but acquitted, reaped a golden harvest during the occupation of his premises by the Preston rebels, when a larger sum was obtained for a single chamber than (in the words of a sufferer on the occasion) "would have paid the rent of the best house in St. James's Square or Piccadilly for several years."

Nor was this all. Other and more serious impositions, inasmuch as they affected a poorer class of persons, were practised by the underlings of the gaol. On his first entrance, a prisoner, if unable or unwilling to comply with the exactions of the turnkeys, was thrust into the Condemned Hold, with the worst description of criminals, and terrified by threats into submission. By the old regulations, the free use of strong liquors not being interdicted, a tap-house was kept in the Lodge, and also in a cellar on the Common side—under the superintendence of Mrs. Spurling, formerly, it may be remembered, the hostess of the Dark House at Queenhithe—whence wine, ale, and brandy of inferior quality were dispensed, in false measures, and at high prices throughout the prison, which in noise and de-

bauchery rivalled, if it did not surpass, the lowest tavern.

The chief scene of these disgusting orgies—the cellar just referred to—was a large, low-roofed vault, about four feet below the level of the street, perfectly dark, unless when illumined by a roaring fire, and candles stuck in pyramidal lumps of clay, with a range of butts and barrels at one end, and benches and tables at the other, where the prisoners, debtors and malefactors, male and female, assembled as long as their money lasted, and consumed the time in drinking, smoking, and gaming with cards and dice. Above was a spacious hall, connected with it by a flight of stone steps, at the farther end of which stood an immense grated door, called in the slang of the place, “The Jigger,” through the bars of which the felons in the upper wards were allowed to converse with their friends, or if they wished to enter the room, or join the revellers below, they were at liberty to do so, on payment of a small fine. Thus, the same system of plunder was everywhere carried on. The gaolers robbed the prisoners; the prisoners robbed one another.

Two large wards were situated in the Gate; one of which, the Stone Ward, appropriated to the master debtors, looked towards Holborn; the other, called the Stone Hall, from a huge stone standing in the middle of it, upon which the irons of criminals under sentence of death were knocked off previously to their being taken to the place of execution, faced Newgate Street. Here the prisoners took exercise; and a quaint but striking picture has been left of their appearance when so engaged, by the author of the “English Rogue.” “At my first being acquainted with the place,” says this writer, in the “Miseries of a Prison,” “the prisoners, methought, walking up and down the Stone Hall, looked like so many wrecks upon the sea. Here the ribs of a thousand pounds beating against the Needles—those dangerous rocks, credulity; here floated, to and fro,

silks, stuffs, camlets, and velvet, without giving place to each other, according to their dignity ; here rolled so many pipes of canary, whose bung-holes lying open, were so damaged that the merchant may go hoop for his money." A less picturesque, but more truthful, and, therefore, more melancholy, description of the same scene, is furnished by the shrewd and satirical Ned Ward, who informs us, in the " Delectable History of Whittington's College," that " when the prisoners are disposed to recreate themselves with walking, they go up into a spacious room, called the Stone Hall ; where, when you see them taking a turn together, it would puzzle one to know which is the gentleman, which the mechanic, and which the beggar, for they are all suited in the same garb of squalid poverty, making a spectacle of more pity than executions ; only to be out at the elbows is in fashion here, and a great indecorum not to be threadbare."

In an angle of the Stone Hall was the Iron Hold, a chamber containing a vast assortment of fetters and handcuffs of all weights and sizes. Four prisoners, termed " The Partners," had charge of this hold. Their duty was to see who came in, or went out ; to lock up and open the different wards ; to fether such prisoners as were ordered to be placed in irons ; to distribute the allowances of provision ; and to maintain some show of decorum ; for which latter purpose they were allowed to carry whips and truncheons. When any violent outrage was committed—and such matters were of daily, sometimes hourly, occurrence—a bell, the rope of which descended into the hall, brought the whole of the turnkeys to their assistance. A narrow passage at the north of the Stone Hall led to the Bluebeard's Room of this enchanted castle, a place shunned even by the reckless crew who were compelled to pass it. It was a sort of cooking-room, with an immense fireplace flanked by a couple of caldrons, and was called Jack Ketch's Kitchen, because the quarters of persons executed for

treason were there boiled by the hangman in oil, pitch, and tar, before they were affixed on the city gates, or on London Bridge. Above this revolting spot was the female debtors' ward; below it a gloomy cell, called Tangier; and, lower still, the Stone Hold, a most terrible and noisome dungeon, situated under ground, and unvisited by a single ray of daylight. Built and paved with stone, without beds, or any other sort of protection from the cold, this dreadful hole, accounted the most dark and dismal in the prison, was made the receptacle of such miserable wretches as could not pay the customary fees. Adjoining it was the Lower Ward — "Though, in what degree of latitude it was situated," observes Ned Ward, "I cannot positively demonstrate, unless it lay ninety degrees beyond the North Pole; for instead of being dark there but half a year, it is dark all the year round." It was only a shade better than the Stone Hold. Here were imprisoned the fines; and, "perhaps," adds the before-cited authority, "if he behaved himself, an outlawed person might creep in among them." Ascending the gate once more on the way back, we find over the Stone Hall another large room called Debtors' Hall, facing Newgate Street, "with very good air and light." A little too much of the former, perhaps; as, the windows being unglazed, the prisoners were subjected to severe annoyance from the weather and easterly winds.

Of the women felons' rooms nothing has yet been said. There were two. One called Waterman's Hall, a horrible place adjoining the postern under the gate, whence, through a small barred aperture, they solicited alms from the passengers: the other, a large chamber, denominated My Lady's Hold, was situated in the highest part of the gaol, at the northern extremity. Neither of these wards had beds, and the unfortunate inmates were obliged to take their rest on the oaken floor. The condition of the rooms was indescribably filthy and disgusting; nor were the habits of the

occupants much more cleanly. In other respects they were equally indecorous and offensive. "It is with no small concern," writes an anonymous historian of Newgate, "that I am obliged to observe that the women in every ward of this prison are exceedingly worse than the worst of the men, not only in respect to their mode of living, but more especially as to their conversation, which, to their great shame, is as profane and wicked as hell itself can possibly be."

There were two Condemned Holds, one for each sex. That for the men lay near the Lodge, with which it was connected by a dark passage. It was a large room, about twenty feet long and fifteen broad, and had an arched stone roof. In fact, it had been anciently the right-hand postern under the gate leading towards the city. The floor was planked with oak, and covered with iron staples, hooks, and ring-bolts, with heavy chains attached to them. There was only one small grated window in this hold, which admitted but little light. Over the gateway towards Snow Hill were two strong wards, called the Castle and the Red Room. They will claim particular attention hereafter.

Many other wards, especially on the Master Debtors' side, have been necessarily omitted in the foregoing hasty enumeration. But there were two places of punishment which merit some notice from their peculiarity. The first of these, the Press Room, a dark, close chamber, near Waterman's Hall, obtained its name from an immense wooden machine kept in it, with which such prisoners as refused to plead to their indictments were pressed to death—a species of inquisitorial torture not discontinued until so lately as the early part of the reign of George the Third, when it was abolished by an express statute. Into the second, denominated the Bilbowes, also a dismal place, refractory prisoners were thrust, and placed in a kind of stocks, whence the name.

The chapel was situated in the south-east angle of the gaol ; the ordinary at the time of this history being the Reverend Thomas Purney ; the deputy chaplain, Mr. Wagstaff.

Much has been advanced by modern writers respecting the demoralising effect of prison society ; and it has been asserted, that a youth once confined in Newgate is certain to come out a confirmed thief. However this may be now, it was unquestionably true of old Newgate. It was the grand nursery of vice—"A famous university," observes Ned Ward, in the *London Spy*, "where, if a man has a mind to educate a hopeful child in the daring science of padding ; the light-fingered subtlety of shop-lifting ; the excellent use of jack and crow ; for the silently drawing bolts, and forcing barricades ; with the knack of sweetening ; or the most ingenious dexterity of picking pockets ; let him but enter in this college on the Common side, and confine him close to his study but for three months ; and if he does not come out qualified to take any degree of villainy, he must be the most honest dunce that ever had the advantage of such eminent tutors."

To bring down this imperfect sketch of Newgate to the present time, it may be mentioned that, being found inadequate to the purpose required, the old gaol was pulled down in 1770. Just at the completion of the new gaol in 1780, it was assailed by the mob during the Gordon riots, fired, and greatly damaged. The devastations, however, were speedily made good ; and in two years more, it was finished. It is a cheering reflection, that in the present prison, with its clean, well-whitewashed, and well-ventilated wards, its airy courts, its infirmary, its improved regulations, and its humane and intelligent officers, many of the miseries of the old gaol are removed. For these beneficial changes society is mainly indebted to the unremitting exertions of the philanthropic HOWARD.

X

How Jack Sheppard got out of the Condemned Hold.

MONDAY, the 31st of August 1724—a day long afterwards remembered by the officers of Newgate—was distinguished by an unusual influx of visitors to the Lodge. On that morning the dead warrant had arrived from Windsor, ordering Sheppard for execution (since his capture by Jonathan Wild in Bedlam, as related in a former chapter, Jack had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to death), together with three other malefactors, on the following Friday. Up to this moment, hopes had been entertained of a respite, strong representations in his favour having been made in the highest quarter; but now that his fate seemed sealed, the curiosity of the sight-seeing public to behold him was redoubled. The prison gates were besieged like the entrance of a booth at a fair; and the Condemned Hold, where he was confined, and to which visitors were admitted at the moderate rate of a guinea a head, had quite the appearance of a show-room. As the day wore on, the crowds diminished—many who would not submit to the turnkey's demands were sent away ungratified—and at five o'clock only two strangers, Mr. Shotbolt, the head turnkey of Clerkenwell Prison, and Mr. Griffin, who held the same office in Westminster Gatehouse, were left in the Lodge. Jack, who had formerly been in the custody of both these gentlemen, gave them a very cordial welcome; apologised for the sorry room he was compelled to receive them in; and when they took leave, insisted on treating them to a double bowl of punch, which they were now discussing with the upper gaoler, Mr. Ireton, and his two satellites, Austin and Langley. At a little distance from the

party sat a tall, sinister-looking personage, with harsh, inflexible features, a gaunt but muscular frame, and large bony hands. He was sipping a glass of cold gin and water, and smoking a short black pipe. His name was Marvel, and his avocation, which was as repulsive as his looks, was that of public executioner. By his side sat a remarkably stout dame, to whom he paid as much attention as it was in his iron nature to pay. She had a nut-brown skin, a swarthy upper lip, a merry black eye, a prominent bust, and a tun-like circumference of waist. A widow for the fourth time, Mrs. Spurling (for she it was), either by her attractions of purse or person, had succeeded in moving the stony heart of Mr. Marvel, who, as he had helped to deprive her of her former husbands, thought himself in duty bound to offer to supply their place. But the lady was not so easily won; and though she did not absolutely reject him, gave him very slight hopes. Mr. Marvel, therefore, remained on his probation. Behind Mrs. Spurling stood her negro attendant, Caliban; a hideous, misshapen, malicious monster, with broad hunched shoulders, a flat nose, and ears like those of a wild beast, a head too large for his body, and a body too long for his legs. This horrible piece of deformity, who acted as drawer and cellarman, and was a constant butt to the small wits of the gaol, was nicknamed the Black Dog of Newgate.

In the general survey of the prison, taken in the preceding chapter, but little was said of the Lodge. It may be well, therefore, before proceeding further, to describe it more minutely. It was approached from the street by a flight of broad stone steps, leading to a ponderous door, plated with iron, and secured on the inner side by huge bolts and a lock, with wards of a prodigious size. A little within stood a second door, or rather wicket, lower than the first, but of equal strength, and surmounted by a row of sharp spikes.

As no apprehension was entertained of an escape by this outlet—nothing of the kind having been attempted by the boldest felon ever incarcerated in Newgate—both doors were generally left open during the daytime. At six o'clock, the wicket was shut ; and at nine, the gaol was altogether locked up. Not far from the entrance, on the left, was a sort of screen, or partition-wall, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, formed of thick oaken planks riveted together by iron bolts, and studded with broad-headed nails. In this screen, which masked the entrance of a dark passage communicating with the Condemned Hold, about five feet from the ground, was a hatch, protected by long spikes set six inches apart, and each of the thickness of an elephant's tusk. The spikes almost touched the upper part of the hatch ; scarcely space enough for the passage of a hand being left between their points and the beam. Here, as has already been observed, condemned malefactors were allowed to converse with such of their guests as had not interest or money enough to procure admission to them in the hold. Beyond the hatch, an angle, formed by a projection in the wall of some three or four feet, served to hide a door conducting to the interior of the prison. At the farther end of the Lodge, the floor was raised to the height of a couple of steps ; whence the whole place, with the exception of the remotest corner of the angle before mentioned, could be commanded at a single glance. On this elevation a table was now placed, around which sat the turnkeys and their guests, regaling themselves on the fragrant beverage provided by the prisoner. A brief description will suffice for them. They were all stout ill-favoured men, attired in the regular gaol-livery of scratch wig and snuff-coloured suit, and had all a strong family likeness to each other. The only difference between the officers of Newgate and their brethren was, that they had enormous bunches of keys

at their girdles, while the latter had left their keys at home.

"Well, I've seen many a gallant fellow in my time, Mr. Ireton," observed the chief turnkey of Westminster Gatehouse, as he helped himself to his third glass of punch; "but I never saw one like Jack Sheppard."

"Nor I," returned Ireton, following his example; "and I've had some experience, too. Ever since he came here, three months ago, he has been the life and soul of the place; and now the dead warrant has arrived, instead of being cast down, as most men would be, and as all others *are*, he's gayer than ever. Well, *I* shall be sorry to lose him, Mr. Griffin. We've made a pretty penny by him—sixty guineas this blessed day."

"No more!" cried Griffin incredulously; "I should have thought you must have made double that sum at least."

"Not a farthing more, I assure you," rejoined Ireton pettishly; "we're all on the square here. I took the money myself, and *ought* to know."

"Oh! certainly," answered Griffin; "certainly."

"I offered Jack five guineas as his share," continued Ireton; "but he wouldn't take it himself, and gave it to the poor debtors and felons, who are now drinking it out in the cellar on the Common Side."

"Jack's a noble fellow," exclaimed the head-gaoler of Clerkenwell Prison, raising his glass; "and, though he played me a scurvy trick, I'll drink to his speedy deliverance."

"At Tyburn, eh, Mr. Shotbolt?" rejoined the executioner. "I'll pledge you in that toast with all my heart."

"Well, for my part," observed Mrs. Spurling, "I hope he may never see Tyburn. And, if I'd my own way with the secretary of state, he never *should*. It's a thousand pities to hang so pretty a fellow. There

haven't been so many ladies in the Lodge since the days of Claude Du Val, the gentleman highwayman; and they all declare it'll break their hearts if he's scragged."

"Bah!" ejaculated Marvel gruffly.

"You think our sex has no feeling, I suppose, sir," cried Mrs. Spurling indignantly; "but I can tell you we have. And, what's more, I tell you, if Captain Sheppard is hanged, you need never hope to call *me* Mrs. Marvel."

"Zounds!" cried the executioner in astonishment. "Do you know what you are talking about, Mrs. Spurling? Why, if Captain Sheppard should get off, it 'ud be fifty guineas out of my way. There's the grand lace coat he wore at his trial, which I intend for my wedding-dress."

"Don't mention such a thing, sir," interrupted the tapstress. "I couldn't bear to see you in it. Your speaking of the trial brings the whole scene to my mind. Ah! I shall never forget the figure Jack cut on that occasion. What a buzz of admiration ran round the court as he appeared! And how handsome and composed he looked! Everybody wondered that such a stripling could commit such desperate robberies. His firmness never deserted him till his old master, Mr. Wood, was examined. Then he *did* give way a bit. And when Mr. Wood's daughter—to whom, I've heard tell, he was attached some years ago—was brought up, his courage forsook him altogether, and he trembled, and could scarcely stand. Poor young lady! *She* trembled, too, and was unable to give her evidence. When sentence was passed there wasn't a dry eye in the court."

"Yes, there was one," observed Ireton.

"I guess whose you mean," rejoined Shotbolt. "Mr. Wild's."

"Right," answered Ireton. "It's strange the anti-

pathy he bears to Sheppard. I was standing near Jack at that awful moment, and beheld the look Wild fixed on him. It was like the grin of a fiend, and made my flesh creep on my bones. When the prisoner was removed from the dock, we met Jonathan as we passed through the yard. He stopped us, and addressing Jack in a taunting tone, said, 'Well, I've been as good as my word!'—'True,' replied Sheppard; 'and I'll be as good as mine!' And so they parted."

"And I hope he will, if it's anything to Jonathan's disadvantage," muttered Mrs. Spurling, half aside.

"I'm surprised Mr. Wild hasn't been to inquire after him to-day," observed Langley; "it's the first time he's missed doing so since the trial."

"He's gone to Enfield after Blueskin, who has so long eluded his vigilance," rejoined Austin. "Quilt Arnold called this morning to say so. Certain information, it seems, has been received from a female, that Blueskin would be at a flash-ken near the Chase, at five o'clock to-day, and they're all set out in the expectation of nabbing him."

"Mr. Wild had a narrow escape lately, in that affair of Captain Darrell," observed Shotbolt.

"I don't exactly know the rights of that affair," rejoined Griffin with some curiosity.

"Nor any one else, I suspect," answered Ireton, winking significantly. "It's a mysterious transaction altogether. But as much as is known is this: Captain Darrell, who resides with Mr. Wood at Dollis Hill, was assaulted and half killed by a party of ruffians, headed, he swore, by Mr. Wild and his uncle, Sir Rowland Trenchard. Mr. Wild, however, proved, on the evidence of his own servants, that he was at the Old Bailey at the time; and Sir Rowland proved that *he* was in Manchester. So the charge was dismissed. Another charge was then brought against them by the captain, who accused them of kidnapping him when a boy,

and placing him in the hands of a Dutch skipper, named Van Galgebrok, with instructions to throw him overboard, which was done, though he afterwards escaped. But this accusation, for want of sufficient evidence, met with the same fate as the first, and Jonathan came off victorious. It was thought, however, if the skipper *could* have been found, that the result of the case would have been materially different. This was rather too much to expect; for we all know, if Mr. Wild wishes to keep a man out of the way, he'll speedily find the means to do so."

"Ay, ay," cried the gaolers, laughing.

"I could have given awkward evidence in that case, if I'd been so inclined," said Mrs. Spurling, "ay, and found Van Galgebrok too. But I never betray an old customer."

"Mr. Wild is a great man," said the hangman, replenishing his pipe, "and we owe him much, and ought to support him. Were anything to happen to him, Newgate wouldn't be what it is, nor Tyburn either."

"Mr. Wild has given you some employment, Mr. Marvel," remarked Shotbolt.

"A little, sir," replied the executioner, with a grim smile. "Out of the twelve hundred subjects I've tucked up, I may safely place half to his account. If ever he requires my services, he shall find I'm not ungrateful. And though I say it that shouldn't say it, no man can tie a better knot. Mr. Wild, gentleman, and the nubbin'-cheat."

"Fill your glasses, gentlemen," observed Ireton, "and I'll tell you a droll thing Jack said this morning. Amongst others who came to see him was a Mr. Kneebone, a woollen-draper in Wych Street, with whose pockets, it appears, Jack, when a lad, made a little too free. As this gentleman was going away, he said to Jack in a jesting manner, 'that he should be glad to

see him to-night at supper.' Upon which the other answered, 'that he accepted his invitation with pleasure, and would make a point of waiting upon him.' Ha! ha! ha!"

"*Did* he say so?" cried Shotbolt. "Then I advise you to look sharply after him, Mr. Ireton; for may I be hanged myself if I don't believe he'll be as good as his word."

At this juncture, two women, very smartly attired in silk hoods and cloaks, appeared at the door of the Lodge.

"Ah! who have we here?" exclaimed Griffin.

"Only Jack's two wives—Edgeworth Bess and Poll Maggot," replied Austin, laughing.

"They can't go into the Condemned Hold," said Ireton consequentially; "it's against Mr. Wild's orders. They must see the prisoner at the hatch."

"Very well, sir," replied Austin, rising and walking towards them. "Well, my pretty dears," he added—"come to see your husband, eh? You must make the most of your time. You won't have him long. You've heard the news, I suppose?"

"That the dead warrant's arrived," returned Edgeworth Bess, bursting into a flood of tears; "oh! yes, we've heard it."

"How does Jack bear it?" inquired Mrs. Maggot.

"Like a hero," answered Austin.

"I knew he would," replied the Amazon. "Come, Bess, no whimpering. Don't unman him. Are we to see him here?"

"Yes, my love."

"Well, then, lose no time in bringing him to us," said Mrs. Maggot. "There's a guinea to drink our health," she added, slipping a piece of money into his hand.

"Here, Caliban," shouted the under-turnkey, "unlock Captain Sheppard's padlock, and tell him his wives are in the Lodge, waiting to see him."

"Iss, Massa Austin," replied the black. And taking the keys, he departed on the errand. As soon as he was gone, the two women divested themselves of their hoods and cloaks, and threw them, as if inadvertently, into the farthest part of the angle in the wall. Their beautifully proportioned figures and rather over-displayed shoulders attracted the notice of Austin, who inquired of the chief turnkey "whether he should stand by them during the interview."

"Oh! never mind them," said Mrs. Spurling, who had been hastily compounding another bowl of punch. "Sit down, and enjoy yourself. I'll keep a look out that nothing happens."

By this time Caliban had returned, and Jack appeared at the hatch. He was wrapped in a loose dressing-gown of light material, and stood near the corner where the women's dresses had just been thrown down, quite out of sight of all the party, except Mrs. Spurling, who sat on the right of the table.

"Have you got Jonathan out of the way?" he asked, in an eager whisper.

"Yes, yes," replied Edgeworth Bess. "Patience Kate has lured him to Enfield, on a false scent after Blueskin. You need fear no interruption from him, or any of his myrmidons."

"That's well!" cried Jack. "Now stand before me, Poll; I've got the watch-spring saw in my sleeve. Pretend to weep, both of you, as loudly as you can. This spike is more than half cut through. I was at work at it yesterday and the day before. Keep up the clamour for five minutes, and I'll finish it." Thus urged, the damsels began to raise their voices in loud lamentation.

"What the devil are you howling about?" cried Langley. "Do you think we are to be disturbed in this way? Make less noise, hussies, or I'll turn you out of the Lodge."

"For shame, Mr. Langley," rejoined Mrs. Spurling. "I blush for you, sir! To call yourself a man, and interfere with the natural course of affection! Have you no feeling for the situation of those poor disconsolate creatures, about to be bereaved of all they hold dear? Is it nothing to part with a husband to the gallows? I've lost four in the same way, and know what it is."

Here she began to blubber loudly for sympathy.

"Comfort yourself, my charmer," said Mr. Marvel, in a tone intended to be consolatory. "I'll be their substitute."

"*You!*" cried the tapstress, with a look of horror. "Never!"

"Confusion!" muttered Jack, suddenly pausing in his task; "the saw has broken, just as I am through the spike."

"Can't we break it off?" asked Mrs. Maggot.

"I fear not," replied Jack despondingly.

"Let's try, at all events," returned the Amazon.

And grasping the thick iron rod, she pushed with all her force against it, while Jack seconded her efforts from within. After great exertions on both parts, the spike yielded to their combined strength, and snapped suddenly off.

"Halloa—what's that?" cried Austin, starting up.

"Only my darbies," returned Jack, clinking his chains.

"Oh! that was all, was it?" said the turnkey, quietly reseating himself.

"Now give me the woollen cloth to tie round my fetters," whispered Sheppard. "Quick."

"Here it is," replied Edgeworth Bess.

"Give me your hand, Poll, to help me through," cried Jack, as he accomplished the operation. "Keep a sharp look out, Bess."

"Stop!" interposed Edgeworth Bess; "Mr. Langley is getting up, and coming this way. We're lost."

"Help me through at all hazards, Poll," cried Jack, straining towards the opening.

"The danger's past," whispered Bess. "Mrs. Spurling has induced him to sit down again. Ah! she looks this way, and puts her finger to her lips. She comprehends what we're about. We're all safe!"

"Don't lose a moment, then," cried Jack, forcing himself into the aperture, while the Amazon, assisted by Bess, pulled him through it.

"There!" cried Mrs. Maggot, as she placed him without noise upon the ground; "you're safe so far."

"Come, my disconsolate darlings," cried Austin; "it only wants five minutes to six. I expect Mr. Wild here presently. Cut it as short as you can."

"Only two minutes more, sir," entreated Edgeworth Bess, advancing towards him in such a manner as to screen Jack, who crept into the farthest part of the angle—"only two minutes, and we've done."

"Well, well, I'm not within a minute," rejoined the turnkey.

"We shall never be able to get you out unseen, Jack," whispered Poll Maggot. "You must make a bold push."

"Impossible," replied Sheppard, in the same tone. "That would be certain destruction. I can't run in these heavy fetters. No: I must face it out. Tell Bess to slip out, and I'll put on her cloak and hood."

Meanwhile, the party at the table continued drinking and chatting as merrily as before.

"I can't help thinking of Jack Sheppard's speech to Mr. Kneebone," observed Shotbolt, as he emptied his tenth tumbler. "I am sure he's meditating an escape, and hopes to accomplish it to-night."

"Pooh! pooh!" rejoined Ireton; "it was mere idle boasting. I examined the Condemned Hold myself carefully this morning, and didn't find a nail out of its place. Recollect he's chained to the ground by a great

*Jack Shepherd escaping from the Crows
Hold at Newcastle.*





Wm. Harrison

horse-padlock, and is never unloosed except when he comes to that hatch. If he escapes at all, it must be before our faces."

"It wouldn't surprise me if he did," remarked Griffin. "He's audacity enough for anything. He got out in much the same way from the Gatehouse—stole the keys, and passed through a room where I was sitting half asleep in a chair."

"Caught you napping, eh?" rejoined Ireton, with a laugh. "Well, he won't do that here. I'll forgive him if he does."

"And so will I," said Austin. "We're too wide awake for that. Ain't we, partner?" he added, appealing to Langley, whom punch had made rather dozy.

"I should think so," responded the lethargic turnkey, with a yawn.

During this colloquy, Jack had contrived unobserved to put on the hood and cloak, and being about the size of the rightful owner, presented a very tolerable resemblance to her. This done, Edgeworth Bess, who watched her opportunity, slipped out of the Lodge.

"Halloa!" exclaimed Austin, who had caught a glimpse of her departing figure, "one of the women is gone!"

"No — no," hastily interposed Mrs. Spurling; "they're both here. Don't you see they're putting on their cloaks?"

"That's false!" rejoined Marvel, in a low tone; "I perceive what has taken place."

"Oh! goodness!" ejaculated the tapstress, in alarm. "You won't betray him?"

"Say the word, and I'm mum," returned the executioner. "Will you be mine?"

"It's a very unfair advantage to take—very," replied Mrs. Spurling; "however, I consent."

"Then I'll lend a helping hand. I shall lose my fees and the laced coat. But it's better to have the

bride without the weddin' dress, than the weddin' dress without the bride."

At this moment, Saint Sepulchre's clock struck six.

"Close the wicket, Austin," vociferated Ireton, in an authoritative tone.

"Good-bye!" cried Jack, as if taking leave of his mistresses; "to-morrow at the same time."

"We'll be punctual," replied Mrs. Maggot. "Good-bye, Jack. Keep up your spirits."

"Now for it—life or death!" exclaimed Jack, assuming the gait of a female, and stepping towards the door.

As Austin rose to execute his principal's commands, and usher the women to the gate, Mrs. Spurling and Marvel rose too. The latter walked carelessly towards the hatch, and leaning his back against the place whence the spike had been removed, so as completely to hide it, continued smoking his pipe as coolly as if nothing had happened. Just as Jack had gained the entrance, he heard a man's footstep behind him, and, aware that the slightest indiscretion would betray him, he halted, uncertain what to do.

"Stop a minute, my dear," cried Austin. "You forget that you promised me a kiss the last time you were here."

"Won't one from me do as well?" interposed Mrs. Maggot.

"Much better," said Mrs. Spurling, hastening to the rescue. "I want to speak to Edgeworth Bess myself."

So saying, she planted herself between Jack and the turnkey. It was a moment of breathless interest to all engaged in the attempt.

"Come—the kiss," cried Austin, endeavouring to pass his arm familiarly round the Amazon's waist.

"Hands off," she exclaimed, "or you'll repent it."

"Why, what'll you do," demanded the turnkey.

"Teach you to keep your distance," retorted Mrs.

Maggot, dealing him a buffet that sent him reeling several yards backwards.

"There, off with you," whispered Mrs. Spurling, squeezing Jack's arm, and pushing him towards the door, "and don't come here again."

Before Austin could recover himself, Jack and Mrs. Maggot had disappeared.

"Bolt the wicket," shouted Ireton, who, with the others, had been not a little entertained by the gallant turnkey's discomfiture.

This was done, and Austin returned with a crest-fallen look to the table. Upon which Mrs. Spurling, and her now accepted suitor, resumed their seats.

"You'll be as good as your word, my charmer," whispered the executioner.

"Of course," responded the widow, heaving a deep sigh. "Oh, Jack! Jack!—you little know what a price I've paid for you."

"Well, I'm glad those women are gone," remarked Shotbolt. "Coupling their presence with Jack's speech, I couldn't help fearing some mischief might ensue."

"That reminds me he's still at large," returned Ireton. "Here, Caliban, go and fasten his padlock."

"Iss, Massa Ireton," replied the black.

"Stop, Caliban," interposed Mrs. Spurling, who wished to protract the discovery of the escape as long as possible. "Before you go, bring me the bottle of pine-apple rum I opened yesterday. I should like Mr. Ireton and his friends to taste it. It is in the lower cupboard. Oh, you haven't got the key—then *I* must have it, I suppose. How provoking," she added, pretending to rummage her pockets; "one never *can* find a thing when one wants it."

"Never mind it, my dear Mrs. Spurling," rejoined Ireton; "we can taste the rum when he returns. We shall have Mr. Wild here presently, and I wouldn't

for the world—Zounds!” he exclaimed, as the figure of the thief-taker appeared at the wicket, “here he is. Off with you, Caliban! Fly, you rascal!”

“Mr. Wild here!” exclaimed Mrs. Spurling in alarm. “Oh gracious! he’s lost.”

“Who’s lost?” demanded Ireton.

“The key,” replied the widow.

All the turnkeys rose to salute the thief-taker, whose habitually sullen countenance looked gloomier than usual. Ireton rushed forward to open the wicket for him.

“No Blueskin, I perceive, sir,” he observed in a deferential tone, as Wild entered the Lodge.

“No,” replied Jonathan moodily. “I’ve been deceived by false information. But the wench who tricked me shall bitterly repent it. I hope this is all. I begin to fear I might be purposely got out of the way. Nothing has gone wrong here?”

“Nothing whatever,” replied Ireton. “Jack is just gone back to the Condemned Hold. His two wives have been here.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Jonathan, with a sudden vehemence that electrified the chief turnkey; “what’s this? a spike gone! ’Sdeath! the women, you say, have been here. He has escaped.”

“Impossible, sir,” replied Ireton, greatly alarmed.

“Impossible,” echoed Wild, with a fearful imprecation. “No, sir, it’s quite possible—more than possible. It’s certain. I’ll lay my life he’s gone. Come with me to the Condemned Hold directly, and if I find my fears confirmed, I’ll——”

He was here interrupted by the sudden entrance of the black, who rushed precipitately into the room, letting fall the heavy bunch of keys in his fright.

“O Massa Ireton! Massa Wild!” ejaculated Caliban, “Shack Sheppard gone!”

"Gone? you black devil!—Gone?" cried Ireton.

"Iss, massa. Caliban sarch ebery hole in de place, but Shack no dere. Only him big hoss-padlock—noting else."

"I knew it," rejoined Wild, with concentrated rage; "and he escaped you all in broad day, before your faces. You may well say it's impossible. His Majesty's gaol of Newgate is admirably guarded, I must say. Ireton, you are in league with him."

"Sir," said the chief turnkey indignantly.

"You *are*, sir," thundered Jonathan; "and, unless you find him, you shan't hold your place a week. I don't threaten idly, as you know. And you, Austin; and you, Langley; I say the same thing to you."

"But, Mr. Wild," implored the turnkeys.

"I've said it," rejoined Jonathan peremptorily. "And you, Marvel, you must have been a party——"

"I, sir?"

"If he's not found, I'll get a new hangman."

"Zounds!" cried Marvel, "I——"

"Hush!" whispered the tapstress, "or I retract my promise."

"Mrs. Spurling," said Jonathan, who overheard the whisper, "you owe your situation to me. If you have aided Jack Sheppard's escape, you shall owe your discharge to me also."

"As you please, sir," replied the tapstress coolly. "And the next time Captain Darrell wants a witness, I promise you he shan't look for one in vain."

"Ha! hussy, dare you threaten?" cried Wild; but checking himself, he turned to Ireton and asked, "How long have the women been gone?"

"Scarcely five minutes," replied the latter.

"One of you fly to the market," returned Jonathan; "another to the river; and a third to the New Mint. Disperse in every direction. We'll have him yet. A hundred pounds to the man who takes him."

So saying, he rushed out, followed by Ireton and Langley.

"A hundred pounds!" exclaimed Shotbolt. "That's a glorious reward. Do you think he'll pay it?"

"I'm sure of it," replied Austin.

"Then I'll have it before to-morrow morning," said the keeper of the New Prison to himself. "If Jack Sheppard sups with Mr. Kneebone, I'll make one of the party."

XI

Dollis Hill Revisited.

ABOUT an hour after the occurrences at Newgate, the door of the small back parlour already described at Dollis Hill was opened by Winifred, who, gliding noiselessly across the room, approached a couch, on which was extended a sleeping female, and gazing anxiously at her pale careworn countenance, murmured—"Heaven be praised! she still slumbers—slumbers peacefully. The opiate has done its duty. Poor thing! how beautiful she looks; but how like death."

Death-like, indeed, was the repose of the sleeper—death-like and deep. Its very calmness was frightful. Her lips were apart, but no breath seemed to issue from them; and, but for a slight—very slight palpitation of the bosom, the vital principle might be supposed to be extinct. This lifeless appearance was heightened by the extreme sharpness of her features—especially the nose and chin—and by the emaciation of her limbs, which was painfully distinct through her drapery. Her attenuated arms were crossed upon her breast; and her black brows and eyelashes contrasted fearfully with the livid whiteness of her skin. A few short, dark locks, escaping from beneath her

head-dress, showed that her hair had been removed, and had only been recently allowed to grow again.

"Poor Mrs. Sheppard!" sighed Winifred, as she contemplated the beautiful wreck before her—"Poor Mrs. Sheppard! When I see her thus, and think of all she has endured, of all she may yet have to endure, I could almost pray for her release from trouble. I dare not reflect upon the effect that her son's fate—if the efforts to save him are ineffectual—may have upon her enfeebled frame, and still worse upon her mind. What a mercy that the blow aimed at her by the ruffian, Wild, though it brought her to the brink of the grave, should have restored her to reason! Ah! she stirs." As she said this, she drew a little aside, while Mrs. Sheppard heaved a deep sigh, and opened her eyes, which now looked larger, blacker, and more melancholy than ever.

"Where am I?" she cried, passing her hand across her brow.

"With your friends, dear Mrs. Sheppard," replied Winifred, advancing.

"Ah! you are there, my dear young lady," said the widow, smiling faintly; "when I first waken, I'm always in dread of finding myself again in that horrible asylum."

"You need never be afraid of that," returned Winifred affectionately; "my father will take care you never leave him more."

"Oh! how much I owe him!" said the widow, with fervour, "for bringing me here, and removing me from those dreadful sights and sounds, that would have driven me distracted, even if I had been in my right mind. And how much I owe *you*, too, dearest Winifred, for your kindness and attention. Without you I should never have recovered either health or reason. I can never be grateful enough. But, though *I* cannot reward you, Heaven will."

"Don't say anything about it, dear Mrs. Sheppard," rejoined Winifred, controlling her emotion, and speaking as cheerfully as she could; "I would do anything in the world for you, and so would my father, and so would Thames; but he *ought*, for he's your nephew, you know. We all love you dearly."

"Bless you! bless you!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, averting her face to hide her tears.

"I mustn't tell you what Thames means to do for you, if ever he gains his rights," continued Winifred; "but I *may* tell you what my father means to do."

"He has done too much already," answered the widow. "I shall need little more."

"But, *do* hear what it is," rejoined Winifred; "you know I'm shortly to be united to your nephew—that is," she added, blushing, "when he can be married by his right name, for my father won't consent to it before."

"Your father will never oppose your happiness, my dear, I'm sure," said Mrs. Sheppard; "but what has this to do with me?"

"You shall hear," replied Winifred; "and when this marriage takes place, you and I shall be closely allied, but my father wishes for a still closer alliance."

"I don't understand you," returned Mrs. Sheppard.

"To be plain, then," said Winifred, "he has asked me whether I have any objection to you as a mother."

"And what—what was your answer?" demanded the widow eagerly.

"Can't you guess?" returned Winifred, throwing her arms about her neck. "That he couldn't choose any one so agreeable to me."

"Winifred," said Mrs. Sheppard, after a brief pause, during which she appeared overcome by her feelings—"Winifred," she said, gently disengaging herself from the young girl's embrace, and speaking in a firm voice, "you must dissuade your father from this step."

"How?" exclaimed the other. "Can you not love him?"

"Love him!" echoed the widow. "The feeling is dead within my breast. My only love is for my poor lost son. I can esteem him, regard him; but love him as he *ought* to be loved—that I cannot do."

"Your esteem is all he will require," urged Winifred.

"He has it, and will ever have it," replied Mrs. Sheppard passionately—"he has my boundless gratitude and devotion. But I am not worthy to be any man's wife—far less *his* wife. Winifred, you are deceived in me. You know not what a wretched guilty thing I am. You know not in what dark places my life has been cast; with what crimes it has been stained. But the offences I *have* committed are venial in comparison with what I should commit were I to wed your father. No—no, it must never be."

"You paint yourself worse than you are, dear Mrs. Sheppard," rejoined Winifred kindly. "Your faults were the faults of circumstances."

"Palliate them as you may," replied the widow gravely, "they *were* faults; and, as such, cannot be repaired by a greater wrong. If you love me do not allude to this subject again."

"I'm sorry I mentioned it at all, since it distresses you," returned Winifred; "but, as I knew my father intended to propose to you, if poor Jack should be respited——"

"*If* he should be respited!" repeated Mrs. Sheppard, with startling eagerness. "Does your father doubt it? Speak! tell me!"

Winifred made no answer.

"Your hesitation convinces me he does," replied the widow. "Is Thames returned from London?"

"Not yet," replied the other; "but I expect him every minute. My father's chief fear, I must tell you, is from the baneful influence of Jonathan Wild."

"That fiend is ever in my path," exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, with a look the wildness of which greatly alarmed her companion. "I cannot scare him thence."

"Hark!" cried Winifred, "Thames is arrived. I hear the sound of his horse's feet in the yard. Now you will learn the result."

"Heaven support me!" cried Mrs. Sheppard faintly.

"Breathe at this phial," said Winifred.

Shortly afterwards—it seemed an age to the anxious mother—Mr. Wood entered the room, followed by Thames. The latter looked very pale, either from the effect of his wound, which was not yet entirely healed, or from suppressed emotion—partly perhaps from both causes—and wore his left arm in a sling.

"Well!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, raising herself, and looking at him as if her life depended on the answer. "He is respited?"

"Alas! no," replied Thames sadly. "The warrant for his execution is arrived. There is no further hope."

"My poor son!" groaned the widow, sinking backwards.

"Heaven have mercy on his soul!" ejaculated Wood.

"Poor Jack!" cried Winifred, burying her face in her lover's bosom.

Not a word was uttered for some time, nor any sound heard except the stifled sobs of the unfortunate mother. At length, she suddenly started to her feet; and, before Winifred could prevent her, staggered up to Thames.

"When is he to suffer?" she demanded, fixing her large black eyes, which burnt with an insane gleam, upon him.

"On Friday," he replied.

"Friday!" echoed Mrs. Sheppard; "and to-day is Monday. He has three days to live. Only three days. Three short days. Horrible!"

"Poor soul! her senses are going again," said Mr.

Wood, terrified by the wildness of her looks. "I was afraid it would be so."

"Only three days," reiterated the widow, "three short, short days—and then all is over. Jonathan's wicked threat is fulfilled at last. The gallows is in view—I see it with all its hideous apparatus!—ough!" and shuddering violently, she placed her hands before her, as if to exclude some frightful vision from her sight.

"Do not despair, my sweet soul," said Wood, in a soothing tone.

"Do not despair!" echoed Mrs. Sheppard, with a laugh that cut the ears of those who listened to it like a razor—"do not despair! And who or what shall give me comfort when my son is gone? I have wept till my eyes are dry—suffered till my heart is broken—prayed till the voice of prayer is dumb—and all of no avail. He will be hanged—hanged—hanged. Ha! ha! What have I left but despair and madness? Promise me one thing, Mr. Wood," she continued, with a sudden change of tone, and convulsively clutching the carpenter's arm; "promise it me."

"Anything, my dear," replied Wood. "What is it?"

"Bury us together in one grave in Willesden Churchyard. There is a small yew-tree west of the church. Beneath that tree let us lie. In one grave, mind. Do you promise to do this?"

"Solemnly," rejoined the carpenter.

"Enough," said the widow gratefully. "I must see him to-night."

"Impossible, dear Mrs. Sheppard," said Thames. "To-morrow I will take you to him."

"To-morrow will be too late," replied the widow, in a hollow voice; "I feel it will. I must go to-night, or I shall never behold him again. I must bless him before I die. I have strength enough to drag myself there, and I do not want to return."

"Be pacified, sweet soul," said Wood, looking

meaningly at Thames; "you *shall* go, and I will accompany you."

"A mother's blessing on you," replied Mrs. Sheppard fervently. "And now," she added, with somewhat more composure, "leave me, dear friends, I entreat, for a few minutes, to collect my scattered thoughts—to prepare myself for what I have to go through—to pray for my son."

"Shall we do so?" whispered Winifred to her father.

"By all means," returned Wood; "don't delay an instant."

And, followed by the young couple, who gazed wistfully at the poor sufferer, he hastily quitted the room, and locked the door after him.

Mrs. Sheppard was no sooner alone than she fell upon her knees by the side of the couch, and poured forth her heart in prayer. So absorbed was she by her passionate supplications, that she was insensible to anything passing around her, until she felt a touch upon her shoulder, and heard a well-known voice breathe in her ear—

"Mother!"

She started at the sound as if an apparition had called her, screamed, and fell into her son's outstretched arms.

"Mother! dear mother!" cried Jack, folding her to his breast.

"My son! my dear, dear son!" returned Mrs. Sheppard, returning his embrace with all a parent's tenderness.

Jack was completely overcome. His chest heaved violently, and big tears coursed rapidly down his cheeks.

"I don't deserve it," he said, at length; "but I would have risked a thousand deaths to enjoy this moment's happiness."

"And you must have risked much to obtain it, my love. I have scarcely recovered from the shock of hearing of your condemnation when I behold you free!"

"Not two hours since," rejoined Jack, "I was chained down in the Condemned Hold in Newgate. With a small saw, conveyed to me a few days since by Thames Darrell, which I contrived to conceal upon my person, I removed a spike in the hatch, and, with the aid of some other friends, worked my way out. Having heard from Thames that you were better, and that your sole anxiety was about me, I came to give you the *first* intelligence of my escape."

"Bless you for it. But you will stay here?"

"I dare not. I must provide for my safety."

"Mr. Wood will protect you," urged Mrs. Sheppard.

"He has not the power—perhaps not the will to do so. And if he would, *I* would not subject him to the annoyance. The moment my escape is known, a large reward will be placed on my head. My dress, my person, will be minutely described. Jonathan Wild and his bloodhounds, with a hundred others, incited by the reward, will be upon my track. Nay, for aught I know, some of them may even now have got scent of me."

"You terrify me," cried Mrs. Sheppard. "Oh! if this is the case, do not stay an instant. Fly! fly!"

"As soon as I can do so with safety, I will return, or send to you," said Jack.

"Do not endanger yourself on my account," rejoined his mother. "I am quite easy now; receive my blessing, my dear son; and if we never meet again, rest assured my last prayer shall be for you."

"Do not talk thus, dear mother," returned Jack, gazing anxiously at her pale countenance, "or I shall not be able to quit you. You must live for me."

"I will try to do so," replied the widow, forcing a smile. "One last embrace. I need not counsel you to avoid those fatal courses which have placed you in such fearful jeopardy."

"You need not," replied Jack, in a tone of the

deepest compunction. "And, oh! forgive me, though I can never forgive myself, for the misery I have caused you."

"Forgive you!" echoed his mother, with a look radiant with delight. "I have nothing to forgive. Ah!" she screamed, with a sudden change of manner; and pointing to the window, which Jack had left open, and at which a dark figure was standing, "there is Jonathan Wild!"

"Betrayed!" exclaimed Jack, glancing in the same direction. "The door! — the door! — death!" he added, as he tried the handle, "it is locked, and I am unarmed. Madman that I am to be so!"

"Help!" shrieked Mrs. Sheppard.

"Be silent," said Jonathan, striding deliberately into the room; "these cries will avail you nothing. Whoever answers them must assist me to capture your son. Be silent, I say, if you value his safety."

Awed by Jonathan's manner, Mrs. Sheppard repressed the scream that rose to her lips, and both mother and son gazed with apprehension at the heavy figure of the thief-taker, which, viewed in the twilight, seemed dilated to twice its natural size, and appeared almost to block up the window.

In addition to his customary arms, Jonathan carried a bludgeon with a large heavy knob, suspended from his wrist by a loop; a favourite weapon, which he always took with him on dangerous expeditions, and which, if any information had been requisite, would have told Sheppard that the present was one of them.

"Well, Jack," he said, after a pause, "are you disposed to go back quietly with me?"

"You'll ascertain that when you attempt to touch me," rejoined Sheppard resolutely.

"My janizaries are within call," returned Wild. "I'm armed; you are not."

"It matters not. You shall not take me alive."

"Spare him! spare him!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, falling on her knees.

"Get up, mother," cried Jack; "do not kneel to him. I wouldn't accept my life from him. I've foiled him hitherto, and will foil him yet. And, come what will, I'll baulk him of the satisfaction of hanging me."

Jonathan raised his bludgeon, but controlled himself by a powerful effort.

"Fool!" he cried, "do you think I wouldn't have secured you before this, if I hadn't some motive for my forbearance?"

"And that motive is fear," replied Jack contemptuously.

"Fear!" echoed Wild, in a terrible tone—"fear! Repeat that word again, and nothing shall save you."

"Don't anger him, my dear son," implored the poor widow, with a look of anguish at Jack. "Perhaps he means well."

"Mad as you are, you're the more sensible of the two, I must say," rejoined Jonathan.

"Spare him!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, who fancied she had made some impression on the obdurate breast of the thief-taker—"spare him! and I will forgive you, will thank you, will bless you. Spare him! spare him!"

"On one condition I *will* spare him," returned Wild; "on one condition only."

"What is it?" asked the poor woman.

"Either he or you must return with me," answered Jonathan.

"Take *me*, then," replied the widow. And she would have rushed to him, if she had not been forcibly withheld by her son.

"Do not go near him, mother," cried Jack; "do not believe him. There is some deep treachery hidden beneath his words."

"I *will* go," said Mrs. Sheppard, struggling to get free.

"Attend to me, Mrs. Sheppard," said Jonathan, looking calmly on at this distressing scene. "Attend to me, and do not heed him. I swear to you, solemnly swear to you, I will save your son's life—nay, more, will befriend him, will place him out of the reach of his enemies, if you consent to become my wife."

"Execrable villain!" exclaimed Jack.

"You hear that," cried Mrs. Sheppard; "he swears to save you."

"Well," replied her son; "and you spurn the proposal?"

"No; she accepts it," rejoined Jonathan triumphantly. "Come along, Mrs. Sheppard. I've a carriage within call shall convey you swiftly to town. Come! Come!"

"Hear me, mother," cried Jack, "and I will explain to you *why* the villain makes this strange and revolting proposal. He well knows that but two lives—those of Thames Darrell and Sir Rowland Trenchard—stand between you and the vast possessions of the family. Those lives removed—and Sir Rowland is completely in his power—the estates would be yours—*HIS!*—if he were your husband. Now do you see his motive?"

"I see nothing but your danger," replied his mother tenderly.

"Granted it were as you say, Jack," said Wild;—"and I shan't take the trouble to contradict you—the estates would be *yours* hereafter."

"Liar!" cried Jack. "Do you affect ignorance that I am a condemned felon, and can inherit nothing? But do not imagine that under any circumstances I would accept your terms. My mother shall never degrade herself by a connection with you."

"Degrade herself," rejoined Jonathan brutally. "Do you think I would take a harlot to my bed, if it didn't suit my purposes to do so?"

"He says right," replied Mrs. Sheppard distractedly. "I am only fit for such as him. Take me! take me!"

"Before an hour you shall be mine," said Jonathan, advancing towards her.

"Back!" cried Jack fiercely; "lay a finger on her, and I will fell you to the ground. Mother! do you know what you do? Would you sell yourself to this fiend?"

"I would sell myself, body and soul, to save you," rejoined his mother, bursting from his grasp. Jonathan caught her in his arms.

"Come away!" he cried, with the roar of a demon.

This laugh and his looks alarmed her.

"It is the fiend!" she exclaimed, recoiling. "Save me!—save me!"

"Damnation!" vociferated Jonathan savagely. "We've no time for any Bedlam scenes now. Come along, you mad jade. I'll teach you submission in time."

With this he endeavoured to force her off; but, before he could accomplish his purpose, he was arrested, and his throat seized by Jack. In the struggle Mrs. Sheppard broke from him and filled the room with her shrieks.

"I'll now pay the debt I owe you," cried Jack, tightening his gripe till the thief-taker blackened in the face.

"Dog!" cried Wild, freeing himself by a powerful effort, and dealing Jack a violent blow with a heavy bludgeon, which knocked him backwards, "you are not yet a match for Jonathan Wild. Neither you nor your mother shall escape me. But I must summon my janizaries." So saying, he raised a whistle to his lips, and blew a loud call; and, as this was unanswered, another still louder. "Confusion!" he cried, "something has happened. But I won't be cheated of my prize."

"Help! help!" shrieked Mrs. Sheppard, fleeing from him to the farthest corner of the room.

But it was of no avail. Jonathan again seized her, when the door was thrown open, and Thames Darrell, followed by Mr. Wood and several serving-men, all well armed, rushed into the room. A glance sufficed to show the young man how matters stood. He flew to the window, and would have passed his sword through the thief-taker's body, if the latter had not quickly interposed the person of Mrs. Sheppard, so that if the blow had been stricken she must have received it.

"Quilt!—Mendez!—Where are you?" vociferated Wild, sounding his whistle for the third time.

"You call in vain," rejoined Thames. "Your assistants are in my power. Yield, villain!"

"Never!" replied Jonathan.

"Put down your burden, monster!" shouted Wood, pointing an immense blunderbuss at him.

"Take her," cried Jonathan; and, flinging the now inanimate body of the poor widow, who had fainted in the struggle, into the arms of Thames, he leaped through the window, and by the time the latter could consign her to Wood, and dart after him, he had disappeared.

"Pursue him," cried Thames to the attendants, "and see that he does not escape."

The order was promptly obeyed.

"Jack," continued Thames, addressing Sheppard, who had only just recovered from the blow and regained his feet. "I don't ask *how* you came here, nor do I blame your rashness in doing so. Fortunately, ever since Wild's late murderous attack the household has all been well armed. A post-chaise seen in the road first alarmed us. On searching the grounds we found two suspicious-looking fellows in the garden, and had scarcely secured them when your mother's cries summoned us hither just in time to preserve her."

"Your arrival was most providential," said Jack.

"You must not remain here another instant," replied

Thames. "My horse is at the door, saddled, with pistols in the holsters—mount him and fly."

"Thames, I have much to say," said Jack; "much that concerns your safety."

"Not now," returned Thames impatiently. "I cannot—will not suffer you to remain here."

"I will go, if you will consent to meet me at midnight near the old house in Wych Street," replied Jack. "By that time I shall have fully considered a plan which occurs to me for defeating the schemes of your enemies."

"Before that time you will be captured if you expose yourself thus," rejoined Thames. "However, I will be there. Farewell."

"Till midnight," replied Jack.

And, imprinting a kiss upon his mother's cold lips, he left the room. He found the horse where Thames told him he would find him, mounted, and rode off across the fields in the direction of town.

XII

The Well Hole.

JONATHAN WILD'S first object, as soon as he had made good his retreat, was to ascertain what had become of his janizaries, and, if possible, to release them. With this view he hurried to the spot where he had left the post-chaise, and found it drawn up at the roadside, the postillion dismounted, and in charge of a couple of farming men.

Advancing towards them, sword in hand, Jonathan so terrified the hinds by his fierce looks and determined manner, that, after a slight show of resistance, they took to their heels, leaving him master of the field.

He then threw open the door of the vehicle, in which he found his janizaries with their arms pinioned, and, leaping into it, ordered the man to drive off. The postillion obeyed, and dashed off as hard as his horses could gallop along the beautiful road leading to Neasdon and Willesden, just as the serving-men made their appearance.

Arrived at the latter place, Jonathan, who, meanwhile, had contrived to liberate his attendants from their bonds, drew up at the Six Bells, and hiring a couple of horses, despatched his attendants in search of Jack Sheppard, while he proceeded to town. Dismissing the post-chaise at the Old Bailey, he walked to Newgate to ascertain what had occurred since the escape. It was just upon the stroke of nine as he entered the Lodge, and Mr. Austin was dismissing a host of inquirers who had been attracted thither by the news—for it had already been extensively noised abroad.

Some of these persons were examining the spot where the spike had been cut off; others the spike itself, now considered a remarkable object; and all were marvelling how Jack could have possibly squeezed himself through such a narrow aperture, until it was explained to them by Mr. Austin that the renowned housebreaker was of slender bodily conformation, and therefore able to achieve a feat which he, Mr. Austin, or any man of similar dimensions, would have found wholly impossible.

Affixed to the wall, in a conspicuous situation, was a large placard, which, after minutely describing Sheppard's appearance and attire, concluded thus:—

“Whoever will discover or apprehend the above JOHN SHEPPARD, so that he be brought to justice, shall receive ONE HUNDRED GUINEAS REWARD, to be paid by MR. PITT, the keeper of Newgate.”

This placard attracted universal attention. While Jonathan was conversing with Austin, from whom he

took care to conceal the fact of his having seen Sheppard since his escape, Ireton entered the Lodge.

"Altogether unsuccessful, sir," said the chief turnkey, with a look of disappointment, not unmixed with apprehension, as he approached Wild. "I've been to all the flash houses in town, and can hear nothing of him or his wives. First, I went to Country Tom's, the Goat, in Long Lane. Tom swore he hadn't set eyes on him since the trial. I next proceeded to Jenny Bunch's, the Ship, in Trig Lane—there I got the same answer. Then to the Feathers, in Drury Lane. Then to the Golden Ball, in the same street. Then to Martin's brandy-shop, in Fleet Street. Then to Dan Ware's, in Hanging-sword Court. Then to the Dean's Head in Saint Martin's-le-Grand. And, lastly, to the Seven Cities o' Refuge, in the New Mint. And nowhere could I obtain the slightest information."

"Humph!" exclaimed Wild.

"Have you been more successful, sir?" ventured Ireton.

Jonathan shook his head.

"Mr. Shotbolt thinks he has a scheme that can't fail," interposed Austin; "but he wishes to know whether you'll be as good as your word, in respect to the great reward you offered for Jack's capture."

"Have I ever broken my word in such matters, that he dares to put the question?" rejoined Jonathan sternly. "Tell Mr. Shotbolt that if he, or any other, takes Jack Sheppard before to-morrow morning, I'll double it. Do you hear?"

"I do, sir," replied Austin respectfully.

"Two hundred pounds, if he's lodged in Newgate before to-morrow morning," continued Wild. "Make it known among your friends." And he strode out of the place.

"Two hundred pounds!" exclaimed Ireton, "besides the governor's offer—that's three hundred. I must go

to work again. Keep a sharp look out, Austin, and see that we lose no one else. I should be sorry if Shotbolt got the reward."

"Devilish hard ! I'm not allowed a chance," grumbled Austin, as he was left alone. "However, some one *must* look after the gaol ; and they're all gone but me. It's fortunate we've no more Jack Sheppards, or I should stand but a poor chance. Well, I don't think they'll any of 'em nab him, that's one comfort."

On quitting the Lodge, Wild repaired to his own habitation. Telling the porter that he would attend to the house himself, he bade him go in search of Jack Sheppard. There was something in Jonathan's manner, as he issued this command, that struck the man as singular, and he afterwards recalled it. He, however, made no remark at the time, but instantly prepared to set out.

As soon as he was gone, Jonathan went upstairs to the audience-chamber, and, sitting down, appeared for some time buried in reflection. The dark and desperate thoughts that were passing through his mind, at this time, will presently be shown. After awhile, he raised his eyes ; and, if their glance could have been witnessed at the moment, it could not have been easily forgotten. Muttering something to himself, he appeared to be telling upon his fingers the advantages and disadvantages of some scheme he had in contemplation. That he had resolved upon its execution, whatever it might be, was evident, from his saying aloud—

"I will do it. So good an opportunity may never occur again."

Upon this he arose, and paced the room hastily backwards and forwards, as if further arranging his plans. He then unlocked a cabinet, opened a secret drawer, and, after ransacking its contents, discovered a paper he was in search of, and a glove. Laying these carefully aside, he restored the drawer to its place.

His next occupation was to take out his pistols, examine the priming, and rub the flints. His sword then came in for his scrutiny: he felt at, and appeared satisfied with its edge. This employment seemed to afford him the highest satisfaction; for a diabolical grin—it cannot be called a smile—played upon his face all the time he was engaged in it. His sword done with, he took up the bludgeon; balanced it in his hand; upon the points of his fingers; and let it fall with a smash intentionally upon the table.

“After all,” he said, “this is the safest weapon. No instrument I’ve ever used has done me such good service. It *shall* be the bludgeon.” So saying, he slung it upon his wrist.

Taking up a link, which was blazing beside him, he walked across the room; and touching a spring in the wall, a secret door flew open. Beyond was a narrow bridge, crossing a circular building, at the bottom of which lay a deep well. It was a dark, mysterious place, and what it was used for no one exactly knew; but it was called by those who had seen it, the Well Hole. The bridge was protected on either side by a railing with banisters placed at wide intervals. Steps to aid the descent, which was too steep to be safe without them, led to a door on the opposite side. This door, which was open, Jonathan locked, and took out the key.

As he stood upon the bridge, he held down the light, and looked into the profound abyss. The red glare fell upon the slimy brickwork, and tinged the inky waters below. A slight cough uttered by Jonathan at the moment, awakened the echoes of the place, and was returned in hollow reverberations. “There’ll be a louder echo here presently,” thought Jonathan. Before leaving the place he looked upwards, and could just discern the blue vault and pale stars of heaven through an iron grating at the top.

On his return to the room, Jonathan purposely left the door of the Well Hole ajar. Unlocking a cupboard, he then took out some cold meat and other viands, with a flask of wine, and a bottle of brandy, and began to eat and drink voraciously.

He had very nearly cleared the board, when a knock was heard below, and descending at the summons, he found his two janizaries. They had both been unsuccessful. As Jonathan scarcely expected a more satisfactory result, he made no comment; but, ordering Quilt to continue his search, and not to return until he had found the fugitive, called Abraham Mendez into the house, and shut the door.

"I want you for the job I spoke of a short time ago, Nab," he said. "I mean to have no one but yourself in it. Come upstairs, and take a glass of brandy."

Abraham grinned, and silently followed his master, who, as soon as they reached the audience-chamber, poured out a bumper of spirits and presented it to him. The Jew swallowed it at a draught.

"By my shoul!" he exclaimed, smacking his lips, "dat ish goot—very goot."

"You shall finish the bottle when the job's done," replied Jonathan.

"Vat ish it, Misther Vild?" inquired Mendez. "Shir Rowland Trenchard's affair—eh?"

"That's it," rejoined Jonathan. "I expect him here every minute. When you've admitted him, steal into the room, hide yourself, and don't move till I utter the words, 'You've a long journey before you.' That's your signal."

"And a famoush goot signal it ish," laughed Abraham. "He hash a long journey before him—ah! ah!"

"Peace!" cried Jonathan. "There's his knock. Go and let him in. And mind you don't arouse his suspicions."

“Never fear—never fear,” rejoined Abraham, as he took up the link, and left the room.

Jonathan cast a hasty glance around, to see that all was properly arranged for his purpose; placed a chair with its back to the door; disposed the lights on the table so as to throw the entrance of the room more into shadow; and then flung himself into a seat, to await Sir Rowland’s arrival. He had not to wait long.

Enveloped in a large cloak, Sir Rowland stalked into the room, and took the seat assigned him; while the Jew, who received a private signal from Jonathan, set down the link near the entrance of the Well Hole, and having made fast the door, crept behind one of the cases.

Fancying they were alone, Sir Rowland threw aside his cloak, and produced a heavy bag of money, which he flung upon the table; and, when Wild had feasted his greedy eyes sufficiently upon its golden contents, he handed him a pocket-book filled with notes.

“You have behaved like a man of honour, Sir Rowland,” said Wild, after he had twice told over the money. “Right to a farthing.”

“Give me an acquittance,” said Trenchard.

“It’s scarcely necessary,” replied Wild; “however, if you require it, certainly. There it is. ‘Received from Sir Rowland Trenchard, fifteen thousand pounds.—Jonathan Wild: August 31st, 1724.’ Will that do?”

“It will,” replied Trenchard. “This is our last transaction together.”

“I hope not,” replied Wild.

“It is the last,” continued the knight sternly; “and I trust we may never meet again. I have paid you this large sum—not because you are entitled to it, for you have failed in what you undertook to do, but because I desire to be troubled with you no further. I have now settled my affairs, and made every preparation for my departure to France, where I shall

spend the remainder of my days. And I have made such arrangements that at my decease tardy justice will be done my injured nephew."

"You have made no such arrangements as will compromise me, I hope, Sir Rowland?" said Wild hastily.

"While I live you are safe," rejoined Trenchard; "after my death I can answer for nothing."

"Sblood!" exclaimed Wild uneasily. "This alters the case materially. When were you last confessed, Sir Rowland?" he added abruptly.

"Why do you ask?" rejoined the other haughtily.

"Because—because I'm always distrustful of a priest," rejoined Jonathan.

"I have just parted from one," said Trenchard,

"So much the worse," replied Jonathan, rising and taking a turn, as if uncertain what to do.

"So much the better," rejoined Sir Rowland. "He who stands on the verge of the grave, as I do, should never be unprepared."

"You're strangely superstitious, Sir Rowland," said Jonathan, halting, and looking steadfastly at him.

"If I were so, I should not be here," returned Trenchard.

"How so?" asked Wild curiously.

"I had a terrible dream last night. I thought my sister and her murdered husband dragged me hither to this very room, and commanded you to slay me."

"A terrible dream, indeed," said Jonathan thoughtfully. "But you mustn't indulge these gloomy thoughts. Let me recommend a glass of wine."

"My penance forbids it," said Trenchard, waving his hand. "I cannot remain here long."

"You will remain longer than you anticipate," muttered Wild.

"Before I go," continued Sir Rowland, "I must beg of you to disclose to me all you know relative to the parentage of Thames Darrell."

"Willingly," replied Wild. "Thinking it likely you might desire to have this information, I prepared accordingly. First, look at this glove. It belonged to his father, and was worn by him on the night he was murdered. You will observe that a coronet is embroidered on it."

"Ha!" exclaimed Trenchard, starting, "is he so highly born?"

"This letter will inform you," replied Wild, placing a document in his hand.

"What is this?" cried Sir Rowland. "I know the hand—ha! my friend! and I have murdered *him*! And my sister was thus nobly, thus illustriously wedded. O God! O God!"

And he appeared convulsed with agony.

"Oh! if I had known this," he exclaimed, "what guilt, what remorse might have been spared me."

"Repentance comes too late when the deed's done," returned Wild bitterly.

"It is not too late to repair the wrong I have done my nephew," cried Trenchard. "I will set about it instantly. He shall have the estates. I will return to Manchester at once."

"You had better take some refreshment before you start," rejoined Wild. "*'You've a long journey before you.'*"

As the signal was given, the Jew, who had been some time in expectation of it, darted swiftly and silently behind Sir Rowland, and flung a cloth over his head; while Jonathan, rushing upon him in front, struck him several quick and violent blows in the face with the bludgeon. The white cloth was instantly dyed with crimson; but, regardless of this, Jonathan continued his murderous assault.

The struggles of the wounded man were desperate—so desperate, that in his agony he overset the table, and, in the confusion, tore off the cloth, and disclosed

a face horribly mutilated, and streaming with blood. So appalling was the sight, that even the murderers—familiar as they were with scenes of slaughter—looked aghast at it.

During this dreadful pause the wretched man felt for his sword. It had been removed from the scabbard by the Jew. He uttered a deep groan, but said nothing.

“Despatch him,” roared Jonathan.

Having no means of defence, Sir Rowland cleared the blood from his vision; and, turning to see whether there were any means of escape, he descried the open door behind him leading to the Well Hole, and instantly darted through it.

“As I could wish,” cried Jonathan. “Bring the light, Nab.”

The Jew snatched up the link, and followed him.

A struggle of the most terrific kind now ensued. The wounded man had descended the bridge, and dashed himself against the door beyond it; but finding it impossible to force his way farther, he turned to confront his assailants. Jonathan aimed a blow at him, which, if it had taken place, must have instantly terminated the strife; but, avoiding this, he sprang at the thief-taker, and grappled with him.

Firmly built as it was, the bridge creaked in such a manner with their contending efforts, that Abraham durst not venture beyond the door, where he stood, holding the light, a horrified spectator of the scene.

The contest, however, though desperate, was brief. Disengaging his right arm, Jonathan struck his victim a tremendous blow on the head with the bludgeon, that fractured his skull; and, exerting all his strength, threw him over the rails, to which he clung with the tenacity of despair.

“Spare me!” he groaned, looking upwards. “Spare me!”

Jonathan, however, instead of answering him,

searched for his knife, with the intention of severing his wrist. But not finding it, he had again recourse to the bludgeon, and began beating the hand fixed on the upper rail, until by smashing the fingers, he forced it to relinquish its hold. He then stamped upon the hand on the lower banister, until that also relaxed its gripe. Sir Rowland then fell. A hollow plunge, echoed and re-echoed by the walls, marked his descent into the water.

"Give me the link," cried Jonathan.

Holding down the light, he perceived that the wounded man had risen to the surface, and was trying to clamber up the slippery sides of the well.

"Shoot him! shoot him! Put him out of his mishery," cried the Jew.

"What's the use of wasting a shot?" rejoined Jonathan savagely. "He can't get out."

After making several ineffectual attempts to keep himself above water, Sir Rowland sank, and his groans, which had become gradually fainter and fainter, were heard no more.

"All's over," muttered Jonathan.

"Shall ve go back to de other room?" asked the Jew. "I shall breathe more freely dere. O Chrisht! de door's shut! It musht have schwung to during the schuffle."

"Shut!" exclaimed Wild. "Then we're imprisoned. The spring can't be opened on this side."

"Dere's de other door," cried Mendez, in alarm.

"It only leads to the fencing crib," replied Wild. "There's no outlet that way."

"Can't ve call for asshistanche?"

"And who'll find us, if we do?" rejoined Wild fiercely. "But they *will* find the evidences of slaughter in the other room—the table upset—the bloody cloth—the dead man's sword—the money—and my memorandum, which I forgot to remove. Hell's curses! that after

all my precautions I should be thus entrapped. It's all your fault, you shaking coward! and, but that I feel sure you'll swing for your carelessness, I'd throw you into the well too."

XIII

The Supper at Mr. Kneebone's.

PERSUADED that Jack Sheppard would keep his appointment with Mr. Kneebone, and feeling certain of capturing him if he did so, Shotbolt, on quitting Newgate, hurried to the New Prison to prepare for the enterprise. After debating with himself for some time whether he should employ an assistant, or make the attempt alone, his love of gain overcame his fears, and he decided upon the latter plan. Accordingly, having armed himself with various weapons, including a stout oaken staff, then ordinarily borne by the watch, and put a coil of rope and a gag in his pocket, to be ready in case of need, he set out, about ten o'clock, on the expedition.

Before proceeding to Wych Street, he called at the Lodge to see how matters were going on, and found Mrs. Spurling and Austin at their evening meal, with Caliban in attendance.

"Well, Mr. Shotbolt," cried the turnkey, "I've good news for you. Mr. Wild has doubled his offer, and the governor has likewise proclaimed a reward of one hundred guineas for Jack's apprehension."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Shotbolt.

"Read that," rejoined Austin, pointing to the placard. "I ought to tell you that Mr. Wild's reward is conditional upon Jack's being taken before to-morrow morning. So I fear there's little chance of any one getting it."

"You think so, eh?" chuckled Shotbolt, who was eagerly perusing the reward, and congratulating himself upon his caution; "you think so—ha! ha! Well, don't go to bed, that's all."

"What for?" demanded the turnkey.

"Because the prisoner's arrival might disturb you—ha! ha!"

"I'll lay you twenty guineas you don't take him to-night," rejoined Austin.

"Done!" cried Shotbolt. "Mrs. Spurling, you're a witness to the bet. Twenty guineas, mind. I shan't let you off a farthing. Egad! I shall make a good thing of it."

"Never count your chickens till they're hatched," observed Mrs. Spurling dryly.

"*My* chickens are hatched; or, at least, nearly so," replied Shotbolt, with increased merriment. "Get ready your heaviest irons, Austin. I'll send you word when I catch him."

"You'd better send *him*," jeered the turnkey.

"So I will," rejoined Shotbolt; "so I will. If I don't, you shall clap me in the Condemned Hold in his stead. Good-bye for the present—ha! ha!"

And, laughing loudly at his own facetiousness, he quitted the Lodge.

"I'll lay my life he's gone on a fox-and-goose chase to Mr. Kneebone's," remarked Austin, rising to fasten the door.

"I shouldn't wonder," replied Mrs. Spurling, as if struck by a sudden idea. And, while the turnkey was busy with the keys, she whispered to the black, "Follow him, Caliban. Take care he don't see you—and bring me word where he goes, and what he does."

"Iss, missis," grinned the black.

"Be so good as to let Caliban out, Mr. Austin," continued the tapstress; "he's only going on an errand."

Austin readily complied with her request. As he

returned to the table, he put his finger to his nose ; and, though he said nothing, he thought he had a better chance of winning his wager.

Unconscious that his movements were watched, Shotbolt, meanwhile, hastened towards Wych Street. On the way, he hired a chair with a couple of stout porters, and ordered them to follow him. Arrived within a short distance of his destination, he came to a halt, and pointing out a dark court nearly opposite the woollen-draper's abode, told the chairmen to wait there till they were summoned.

"I'm a peace-officer," he added, "about to arrest a notorious criminal. He'll be brought out at this door, and may probably make some resistance. But you must get him into the chair as fast as you can, and hurry off to Newgate."

"And what'll we get for the job, yer hon'r?" asked the foremost chairman, who, like most of his tribe at the time, was an Irishman.

"Five guineas. Here's a couple in hand."

"Faix, then, we'll do it in style," cried the fellow. "Once in this chair, yer hon'r, and I'll warrant he'll not get out so aisily as Jack Sheppard did from the New Pris'n."

"Hold your tongue, sirrah," rejoined Shotbolt, not over-pleased by the remark, "and mind what I tell you. Ah! what's that?" he exclaimed, as some one brushed hastily past him. "If I hadn't just left him, I could have sworn it was Mrs. Spurling's sooty imp, Caliban."

Having seen the chairmen concealed in the entry, Shotbolt proceeded to Mr. Kneebone's habitation, the shutters of which were closed, and knocked at the door. The summons was instantly answered by a shop-boy.

"Is your master at home?" inquired the gaoler.

"He is," replied a portly personage, arrayed in a

gorgeous yellow brocade dressing-gown, lined with cherry-coloured satin, and having a crimson velvet cap, surmounted by a gold tassel, on his head. "My name is Kneebone," added the portly personage, stepping forward. "What do you want with me?"

"A word in private," replied the other.

"Stand aside, Tom," commanded Kneebone. "Now, sir," he added, glancing suspiciously at the applicant, "your business?"

"My business is to acquaint you that Jack Sheppard has escaped, Mr. Kneebone," returned Shotbolt.

"The deuce he has! Why, it's only a few hours since I beheld him chained down with half a hundred-weight of iron, in the strongest ward at Newgate. It's almost incredible. Are you sure you're not misinformed, sir?"

"I was in the Lodge at the time," replied the gaoler.

"Then, of course, you must know. Well, it's scarcely credible. When I gave him an invitation to supper, I little thought he'd accept it. But, egad! I believe he *will*."

"I'm convinced of it," replied Shotbolt; "and it was on that very account I came here."

And he proceeded to unfold his scheme to the woollen-draper.

"Well, sir," said Kneebone, when the other concluded, "I shall certainly not oppose his capture, but, at the same time, I'll lend you no assistance. If he keeps *his* word, I'll keep *mine*. You must wait till supper's over."

"As you please, sir—provided you don't let him off."

"That I'll engage not to do. I've another reason for supposing he'll pay me a visit. I refused to sign a petition in his behalf to the Recorder; not from any ill-will to him, but because it was prepared by a person whom I particularly dislike—Captain Darrell."

"A very sufficient reason," answered the gaoler.

"Tom," continued Kneebone, calling to the shop-boy, "don't go home. I may want you. Light the lantern. And, if you hear any odd noise in the parlour, don't mind it."

"Not in the least, sir," replied Tom, in a drowsy tone, and with a look seeming to imply that he was too much accustomed to odd noises at night to heed them.

"Now, step this way, Mr. —— What's your name?"

"Shotbolt, sir," replied the gaoler.

"Very well, Mr. Slipshod; follow me."

And he led the way to an inner room, in the middle of which stood a table, covered with a large white cloth.

"Jack Sheppard knows this house, I believe, sir," observed Shotbolt.

"Every inch of it," replied the woollen-draper. "He *ought* to do, seeing that he served his apprenticeship in it to Mr. Wood, by whom it was formerly occupied. His name is carved upon a beam upstairs."

"Indeed!" said Shotbolt. "Where can I hide myself?" he added, glancing round the room in search of a closet.

"Under the table. The cloth nearly touches the floor. Give me your staff. It'll be in your way."

"Suppose he brings Blueskin, or some other ruffian with him," hesitated the gaoler.

"Suppose he does. In that case I'll help you. We shall be equally matched. You're not afraid, Mr. Shoplatch?"

"Not in the least," replied Shotbolt, creeping beneath the table; "there's my staff. Am I quite hidden?"

"Not quite;—keep your feet in. Mind you don't stir till supper's over. I'll stamp twice when we've done."

"I forgot to mention there's a trifling reward for his

capture," cried Shotbolt, popping his head from under the cloth. "If we take him, I don't mind giving you a share—say a fourth—provided you lend a helping hand."

"Curse your reward!" exclaimed Kneebone angrily. "Do you take me for a thief-catcher, like Jonathan Wild, that you dare to affront me by such a proposal?"

"No offence, sir," replied the gaoler humbly. "I didn't imagine for a moment that you'd accept it, but I thought it right to make you the offer."

"Be silent, and conceal yourself. I'm about to ring for supper."

The woollen-draper's application to the bell was answered by a very pretty young woman, with dark Jewish features, roguish black eyes, sleek glossy hair, a trim waist, and a remarkably neat figure; the very model, in short, of a bachelor's housekeeper.

"Rachel," said Mr. Kneebone, addressing his comely attendant, "put a few more plates on the table, and bring up whatever there is in the larder. I expect company."

"Company!" echoed Rachel; "at this time of night?"

"Company, child," repeated Kneebone. "I shall want a bottle or two of sack, and a flask of usquebaugh."

"Anything else, sir?"

"No—stay! you'd better not bring up any silver forks or spoons."

"Why, surely you don't think your guests would steal them?" observed Rachel archly.

"They shan't have the opportunity," replied Kneebone.

And by way of checking his housekeeper's familiarity, he pointed significantly to the table.

"Who's there?" cried Rachel. "I'll see." And before she could be prevented, she lifted up the cloth,

and disclosed Shotbolt. "O Gemini!" she exclaimed. "A man!"

"At your service, my dear," replied the gaoler.

"Now your curiosity's satisfied, child," continued Kneebone, "perhaps you'll attend to my orders."

Not a little perplexed by the mysterious object she had seen, Rachel left the room, and shortly afterwards returned with the materials of a tolerably good supper—to wit, a couple of cold fowls, a tongue, the best part of a sirloin of beef, a jar of pickles, and two small dishes of pastry. To these she added the wines and spirits directed, and, when all was arranged, looked inquisitively at her master.

"I expect a very extraordinary person to supper, Rachel," he remarked.

"The gentleman under the table," she answered. "He *does* seem a very extraordinary person."

"No; another, still more extraordinary."

"Indeed!—who is it?"

"Jack Sheppard."

"What! the famous housebreaker! I thought he was in Newgate."

"He's let out for a few hours," laughed Kneebone; "but he's going back again after supper."

"Oh, dear! how I should like to see him. I'm told he's so handsome."

"I'm sorry I can't indulge you," replied her master, a little piqued. "I shall want nothing more. You had better go to bed."

"It's no use going to bed," answered Rachel. "I shan't sleep a wink while Jack Sheppard's in the house."

"Keep in your own room, at all events," rejoined Kneebone.

"Very well," said Rachel, with a toss of her pretty head, "very well. I'll have a peep at him, if I die for it," she muttered, as she went out

Mr. Kneebone then sat down, to await the arrival of his expected guest. Half-an-hour passed, but Jack did not make his appearance. The woollen-draper looked at his watch. It was eleven o'clock. Another long interval elapsed. The watch was again consulted. It was now a quarter past twelve. Mr. Kneebone, who began to feel sleepy, wound it up, and snuffed the candles.

"I suspect our friend has thought better of it, and won't come," he remarked.

"Have a little patience, sir," rejoined the gaoler.

"How are you off there, Shoplatch?" inquired Kneebone. "Rather cramped, eh?"

"Rather so, sir," replied the other, altering his position. "I shall be able to stretch my limbs presently—ha! ha!"

"Hush!" cried Kneebone, "I hear a noise without. He's coming."

The caution was scarcely uttered, when the door opened, and Jack Sheppard presented himself. He was wrapped in a laced roquelaure, which he threw off on his entrance into the room. It has been already intimated that Jack had an excessive passion for finery; and it might have been added that the chief part of his ill-gotten gains was devoted to the embellishment of his person.

On the present occasion, he appeared to have bestowed more than ordinary attention on his toilette. His apparel was sumptuous in the extreme, and such as was only worn by persons of the highest distinction. It consisted of a full dress-coat of brown-flowered velvet, laced with silver; a waistcoat of white satin, likewise richly embroidered; shoes with red heels, and large diamond buckles; pearl-coloured silk stockings with gold clocks; a muslin cravat, or steenkirk, as it was termed, edged with the finest point lace; ruffles of the same material, and so ample as almost to hide the tips of his fingers; and a silver-hilted sword.

This costume, though somewhat extravagant, dis-

played his slight but perfectly proportioned figure to the greatest advantage. The only departure which he made from the fashion of the period, was in respect to the peruke—an article he could never be induced to wear. In lieu of it, he still adhered to the sleek black crop, which, throughout life, formed a distinguishing feature in his appearance.

Ever since the discovery of his relationship to the Trenchard family, a marked change had taken place in Jack's demeanour and looks, which were so much refined and improved, that he could scarcely be recognised as the same person. Having only seen him in the gloom of a dungeon, and loaded with fetters, Kneebone had not noticed this alteration, but he was now greatly struck by it.

Advancing towards him, he made him a formal salutation, which was coldly returned.

"I am expected, I find," observed Jack, glancing at the well-covered board.

"You are," replied Kneebone. "When I heard of your escape, I felt sure I should see you."

"You judged rightly," rejoined Jack; "I never yet broke an engagement with friend or foe—and never will."

"A bold resolution," said the woollen-draper. "You must have made some exertion to keep your present appointment. Few men could have done as much."

"Perhaps not," replied Jack carelessly. "I would have done more, if necessary."

"Well, take a chair," rejoined Kneebone. "I've waited supper, you perceive."

"First let me introduce my friends," returned Jack, stepping to the door.

"Friends!" echoed Kneebone, with a look of dismay. "My invitation did not extend to them."

Further remonstrance, however, was cut short by the sudden entrance of Mrs. Maggot and Edgeworth Bess.

Behind them stalked Blueskin, enveloped in a rough greatcoat, called—appropriately enough in this instance—a wrap-rascal.

Folding his arms, he placed his back against the door, and burst into a loud laugh. The ladies were, as usual, very gaily dressed; and as usual, also, had resorted to art to heighten their attractions:—

From patches, justly placed, they borrow'd graces,
And with vermilion lacquer'd o'er their faces.

Edgeworth Bess wore a scarlet tabby negligée—a sort of undress, or sack, then much in vogue—which suited her to admiration, and upon her head had what was called a fly-cap, with richly laced lappets. Mrs. Maggot was equipped in a light blue riding-habit, trimmed with silver, a hunting-cap, and a flaxen peruke, and, instead of a whip, carried a stout cudgel.

For a moment, Kneebone had hesitated about giving the signal to Shotbolt, but, thinking a more favourable opportunity might occur, he determined not to hazard matters by undue precipitation.

Placing chairs, therefore, he invited the ladies to be seated, and, paying a similar attention to Jack, began to help to the various dishes, and otherwise fulfil the duties of a host. While this was going on, Blueskin, seeing no notice whatever taken of him, coughed loudly and repeatedly. But finding his hints totally disregarded, he, at length, swaggered up to the table, and thrust in a chair.

“Excuse me,” he said, plunging his fork into a fowl, and transferring it to his plate. “This tongue looks remarkably nice,” he added, slicing off an immense wedge; “excuse me—ho! ho!”

“You make yourself at home, I perceive,” observed Kneebone, with a look of ineffable disgust.

“I generally do,” replied Blueskin, pouring out a bumper of sack. “Your health, Kneebone.”

"Allow me to offer you a glass of usquebaugh, my dear," said Kneebone, turning from him, and regarding Edgeworth Bess with a stare so impertinent, that even that not over-delicate young lady summoned up a blush.

"With pleasure, sir," replied Edgeworth Bess. "Dear me!" she added, as she pledged the amorous woollen-draper, "what a beautiful ring that is!"

"Do you think so?" replied Kneebone, taking it off and placing it on her finger, which he took the opportunity of kissing at the same time; "wear it for my sake."

"Oh, dear!" simpered Edgeworth Bess, endeavouring to hide her confusion by looking steadfastly at her plate.

"You don't eat," continued Kneebone, addressing Jack, who had remained for some time thoughtful and preoccupied, with his head upon his hand.

"The captain has seldom much appetite," replied Blueskin, who, having disposed of the fowl, was commencing a vigorous attack upon the sirloin. "I eat for both."

"So it seems," observed the woollen-draper; "and for every one else too."

"I say, Kneebone," rejoined Blueskin, as he washed down an immense mouthful with another bumper, "do you recollect how nearly Mr. Wild and I were nabbing you in this very room, some nine years ago?"

"I do," replied Kneebone; "and now," he added aside, "the case is altered. I'm nearly nabbing *you*."

"A good deal has occurred since then, eh, captain?" said Blueskin, nudging Jack.

"Much that I would willingly forget. Nothing that I desire to remember," replied Sheppard sternly. "On that night—in this room—in your presence, Blueskin—in yours, Mr. Kneebone, Mrs. Wood struck me a blow which made me a robber."

"She has paid dearly for it," muttered Blueskin.

"She has," rejoined Sheppard. "But I wish her hand had been as deadly as yours. On that night—that fatal night—Winifred crushed all the hopes that were rising in my heart. On that night I surrendered myself to Jonathan Wild, and became—what I am."

"On that night, you first met me, love," said Edgeworth Bess, endeavouring to take his hand, which he coldly withdrew.

"And me," added Mrs. Maggot tenderly.

"Would I had never seen either of you!" cried Jack, rising, and pacing the apartment with a hurried step.

"Well, I'm sure Winifred could never have loved you as well as I do," said Mrs. Maggot.

"*You!*" cried Jack scornfully. "Do you compare *your* love—a love which all may purchase—with *hers*? No one has ever loved me."

"Except me, dear," insinuated Edgeworth Bess. "I've been always true to you."

"Peace!" retorted Jack, with increased bitterness. "I'm your dupe no longer."

"What the devil's in the wind now, captain?" cried Blueskin, in astonishment.

"I'll tell you," replied Jack, with forced calmness. "Within the last few minutes, all my guilty life has passed before me. Nine years ago, I was honest—was happy. Nine years ago I worked in this very house—had a kind, indulgent master, whom I robbed—twice robbed, at your instigation, villain; a mistress, whom you have murdered; a companion, whose friendship I have for ever forfeited; a mother, whose heart I have well-nigh broken. In this room was my ruin begun: in this room it should be ended."

"Come, come, don't take on thus, captain," cried Blueskin, rising, and walking towards him. "If any one's to blame, it's me. I'm ready to bear it all."

"Can you make me honest?" cried Jack. "Can

you make me other than a condemned felon? Can you make me not Jack Sheppard?"

"No," replied Blueskin; "and I wouldn't if I could."

"Curse you!" cried Jack furiously; "curse you! —curse you!"

"Swear away, captain," rejoined Blueskin coolly. "It'll ease your mind."

"Do you mock me?" cried Jack, levelling a pistol at him.

"Not I," replied Blueskin. "Take my life, if you're so disposed. You're welcome to it. And let's see if either of these women, who prate of their love for you, will do as much."

"This is folly," cried Jack, controlling himself by a powerful effort.

"The worst of folly," replied Blueskin, returning to the table, and taking up a glass; "and to put an end to it, I shall drink the health of Jack Sheppard, the housebreaker, and success to him in all his enterprises. And now, let's see who'll refuse the pledge."

"*I will*," replied Sheppard, dashing the glass from his hand. "Sit down, fool!"

"Jack," said Kneebone, who had been considerably interested by the foregoing scene, "are these regrets for your past life sincere?"

"Suppose them so," rejoined Jack, "what then?"

"Nothing — nothing," stammered Kneebone, his prudence getting the better of his sympathy. "I'm glad to hear it, that's all," he added, taking out his snuff-box, his never-failing resource in such emergencies. "It won't do to betray the officer," he muttered.

"Oh, lud! what an exquisite box!" cried Edgeworth Bess. "Is it gold?"

"Pure gold," replied Kneebone. "It was given me by poor dear Mrs. Wood, whose loss I shall ever deplore."

"Pray, let me have a pinch?" said Edgeworth Bess, with a captivating glance. "I'm so excessively fond of snuff."

The woollen-draper replied by gallantly handing her the box, which was instantly snatched from her by Blueskin, who, after helping himself to as much of its contents as he could conveniently squeeze between his thumb and finger, put it very coolly into his pocket.

The action did not pass unnoticed by Sheppard.

"Restore it," he cried in an authoritative voice.

"O'ons! captain," cried Blueskin, as he grumblingly obeyed the command; "if you've left off business yourself, you needn't interfere with other people."

"I should like a little of that plum-tart," said Mrs. Maggot; "but I don't see a spoon."

"I'll ring for one," replied Kneebone, rising accordingly; "but I fear my servants are gone to bed."

Blueskin, meanwhile, having drained and replenished his glass, commenced chanting a snatch of a ballad:—

"Once on a time, as I've heard tell,
In Wych Street Owen Wood did dwell;
A carpenter he was by trade,
And money, I believe, he made.
With his foodle doo!

This carpenter he had a wife,
The plague and torment of his life;
Who, though she did her husband scold,
Loved well a woollen-draper bold.
With her foodle doo!

"I've a toast to propose," cried Sheppard, filling a bumper. "You won't refuse it, Mr. Kneebone?"

"He'd better not," muttered Blueskin.

"What is it?" demanded the woollen-draper, as he returned to the table, and took up a glass.

"The speedy union of Thames Darrell with Winifred Wood," replied Jack.

Kneebone's cheeks glowed with rage, and he set

down the wine untasted, while Blueskin resumed his song.

“ Now Owen Wood had one fair child,
Unlike her mother, meek and mild ;
Her love the draper strove to gain,
But she repaid him with disdain.

With his foodle doo ! ”

“ Peace ! ” cried Jack.

But Blueskin was not to be silenced. He continued his ditty, in spite of the angry glances of his leader.

“ In vain he fondly urged his suit,
And, all in vain, the question put ;
She answered,—‘ Mr. William Kneebone,
Of me, sir, you shall never be bone.’

With your foodle doo !

‘ Thames Darrell has my heart alone,
A noble youth e’en *you* must own :
And if from him my love could stir,
Jack Sheppard I should much prefer.’

With his foodle doo ! ”

“ Do you refuse my toast ? ” cried Jack impatiently.

“ I do,” replied Kneebone.

“ Drink this, then,” roared Blueskin. And pouring the contents of a small powder-flask into a bumper of brandy, he tendered him the mixture.

At this juncture, the door was opened by Rachel.

“ What did you ring for, sir ? ” she asked, eyeing the group with astonishment.

“ Your master wants a few table-spoons, child,” said Mrs. Maggot.

“ Leave the room,” interposed Kneebone angrily.

“ No, I shan’t,” replied Rachel saucily. “ I came to see Jack Sheppard, and I won’t go till you point him out to me. You told me he was going back to Newgate after supper, so I mayn’t have another opportunity.”

“ Oh ! he told you that, did he ? ” said Blueskin, marching up to her, and chucking her under the chin.

"I'll show you Captain Sheppard, my dear. There he stands. I'm his lieutenant—Lieutenant Blueskin. We're two good-looking fellows, ain't we?"

"Very good-looking," replied Rachel. "But where's the strange gentleman I saw under the table?"

"Under the table!" echoed Blueskin, winking at Jack. "When did you see him, my love?"

"A short time ago," replied the housekeeper unsuspectingly.

"The plot's out!" cried Jack.

And, without another word, he seized the table with both hands, and upset it; scattering plates, dishes, bottles, jugs, and glasses far and wide. The crash was tremendous. The lights rolled over, and were extinguished. And, if Rachel had not carried a candle, the room would have been plunged in total darkness.

Amid the confusion, Shotbolt sprang to his feet, and levelling a pistol at Jack's head, commanded him to surrender; but, before any reply could be made, the gaoler's arm was struck up by Blueskin, who, throwing himself upon him, dragged him to the ground. In the struggle the pistol went off, but without damage to either party.

The conflict was of short duration; for Shotbolt was no match for his athletic antagonist. He was speedily disarmed; and the rope and gag being found upon him, were exultingly turned against him by his conqueror, who, after pinioning his arms tightly behind his back, forced open his mouth with the iron, and effectually prevented the utterance of any further outcries.

While the strife was raging, Edgeworth Bess walked up to Rachel, and advised her, if she valued her life, not to scream or stir from the spot; a caution which the housekeeper, whose curiosity far outweighed her fears, received in very good part. In the interim, Jack

advanced to the woollen-draper, and regarding him sternly, thus addressed him :—

“You have violated the laws of hospitality, Mr. Kneebone. I came hither as your guest. You have betrayed me.”

“What faith is to be kept with a felon?” replied the woollen-draper disdainfully.

“He who breaks faith with his benefactor may well justify himself thus,” answered Jack. “I have not trusted you. Others who have done, have found you false.”

“I don’t understand you,” replied Kneebone, in some confusion.

“You soon shall,” rejoined Sheppard. “Where are the packets committed to your charge by Sir Rowland Trenchard?”

“The packets!” exclaimed Kneebone, in alarm.

“It is useless to deny it,” replied Jack. “You were watched to-night by Blueskin. You met Sir Rowland at the house of a Romish priest, Father Spencer. Two packets were committed to your charge, which you undertook to deliver—one to another priest, Sir Rowland’s chaplain, at Manchester—the other to Mr. Wood. Produce them!”

“Never!” replied Kneebone.

“Then, by Heaven, you are a dead man!” replied Jack, cocking a pistol, and pointing it deliberately at his head. “I give you one minute for reflection. After that time, nothing shall save you.”

There was a brief, breathless pause. Even Blueskin looked on with anxiety.

“It is past,” said Jack, placing his finger on the trigger.

“Hold!” cried Kneebone, flinging down the packets; “they are nothing to me.”

“But they are everything to me,” cried Jack, stooping to pick them up. “These packets will establish Thames

Darrell's birth, win him his inheritance, and procure him the hand of Winifred Wood."

"Don't be too sure of that," rejoined Kneebone, snatching up the staff, and aiming a blow at his head, which was fortunately warded off by Mrs. Maggot, who promptly interposed her cudgel.

"Defend yourself!" cried Jack, drawing his sword.

"Leave his punishment to me, Jack," said Mrs. Maggot. "I've the Bridewell account to settle."

"Be it so," replied Jack, putting up his blade. "I've a good deal to do. Show him no quarter, Poll. He deserves none."

"And shall find none," replied the Amazon. "Now, Mr. Kneebone," she added, drawing up her magnificent figure to its full height, and making the heavy cudgel whistle through the air, "look to yourself."

"Stand off, Poll," rejoined the woollen-draper; "I don't want to hurt you. It shall never be said that I raised my arm willingly against a woman."

"I'll forgive you all the harm you do me," rejoined the Amazon. "What! you still hesitate? Will that rouse you, coward?"

And she gave him a smart rap on the head.

"Coward!" cried Kneebone. "Neither man nor woman shall apply that term to me. If you forget your sex, jade, I must forget mine."

With this he attacked her vigorously in his turn. It was a curious sight to see how this extraordinary woman, who, it has been said, was not less remarkable for the extreme delicacy of her features, and the faultless symmetry of her figure, than for her wonderful strength and agility, conducted herself in the present encounter; with what dexterity she parried every blow aimed against her by her adversary, whose head and face, already marked by various ruddy streams, showed how successfully her own hits had been made—how she drew him hither and thither, now leading him on,

now driving him suddenly back; harassing and exhausting him in every possible way, and making it apparent that she could at any moment put an end to the fight, and only delayed the finishing stroke to make his punishment the more severe.

Jack, meanwhile, with Blueskin's assistance, had set the table once more upon its legs, and placing writing materials, which he took from a shelf, upon it, made Shotbolt, who was still gagged, but whose arms were for the moment unbound, sit down before them.

"Write as I dictate," he cried, placing a pen in the gaoler's hand and a pistol to his ear.

Shotbolt nodded in token of acquiescence, and emitted an odd guttural sound.

"Write as follows," continued Jack. "'I have succeeded in capturing Jack Sheppard. The reward is mine. Get all ready for his reception. In a few minutes after the delivery of this note he will be in Newgate.' Sign it," he added, as, after some further threats, the letter was indited according to his dictation, "and direct it to Mr. Austin. That's well. And now, to find a messenger."

"Mr. Kneebone's man is in the shop," said Rachel; "he'll take it."

"Can I trust him?" mused Jack. "Yes; he'll suspect nothing. Give him this letter, child, and bid him take it to the Lodge at Newgate, without loss of time. Blueskin will go with you, for fear of a mistake."

"You might trust me," said Rachel, in an offended tone; "but never mind."

And she left the room with Blueskin, who very politely offered her his arm. Meanwhile, the combat between Kneebone and Mrs. Maggot had been brought to a termination. When the woollen-draper was nearly worn out, the Amazon watched her opportunity, and hitting him on the arm, disabled it.

"That's for Mrs. Wood," she cried, as the staff fell from his grasp.

"I'm at your mercy, Poll," rejoined Kneebone abjectly.

"That's for Winifred," vociferated the Amazon, bringing the cudgel heavily upon his shoulder.

"Damnation!" cried Kneebone.

"That's for myself," rejoined Mrs. Maggot, dealing him a blow, which stretched him senseless on the floor.

"Bravo, Poll!" cried Jack, who, having again pinioned Shotbolt, was now tracing a few hasty lines on a sheet of paper. "You've given him a broken head, I perceive."

"He'll scarcely need a plaster," replied Mrs. Maggot, laughing. "Here, Bess, give me the cord, and I'll tie him to this chest of drawers. I don't think he'll come to himself too soon. But it's best to be on the safe side."

"Decidedly so," replied Edgeworth Bess; "and I'll take this opportunity, while Jack's back is turned—for he's grown so strangely particular—of easing him of his snuff-box. Perhaps," she added, in a whisper, as she appropriated the before-named article, "he has a pocket-book."

"Hush!" replied Mrs. Maggot; "Jack will hear you. We'll come back for that by-and-by, and the dressing-gown."

At this moment, Rachel and Blueskin returned. Their momentary absence seemed to have worked wonders; for now the most perfect understanding appeared to subsist between them.

"Have you sent off the note?" inquired Jack.

"We have, captain," replied Blueskin. "I say *we*, because Miss Rachel and I have struck up a match. Shall I bring off anything?" he added, looking eagerly around.

"No," replied Jack peremptorily.

Having now sealed his letter, Sheppard took a handkerchief, and tying it over Shotbolt's face, so as completely to conceal his features, clapped his hat upon his head, and pushed it over his brows. He next seized the unlucky gaoler, and forced him along, while Blueskin expedited his movements by administering a few kicks behind. When they got to the door, Jack opened it, and mimicking the voice of the gaoler, shouted—

“Now, my lads, all's ready!”

“Here we are,” cried the chairmen, hurrying out of the court with their swinging vehicle; “where is he?”

“Here,” replied Sheppard, dragging out Shotbolt by the collar, while Blueskin pushed him behind, and Mrs. Maggot held up a lantern, which she found in the shop. “In with him!”

“Ay—ay, yer hon'r,” cried the foremost chairman, lending a helping hand. “Get in wid ye, ye villin!” And despite his resistance, Shotbolt was thrust into the chair, which was instantly fastened upon him.

“There, he's as safe as Jack Sheppard in the Condemned Hould,” laughed the man.

“Off with you to Newgate!” cried Jack; “and don't let him out till you get inside the Lodge. There's a letter for the head turnkey, Mr. Ireton. D'ye hear?”

“Yes, yer hon'r,” replied the chairman, taking the note.

“What are you waiting for?” asked Jack impatiently.

“The gen'l'man as hired us,” replied the chairman.

“Oh! he'll be after you directly. He's settling an account in the house. Lose no time. The letter will explain all.”

The chair was then rapidly put in motion, and speedily disappeared.

“What's to be done next?” cried Blueskin, returning to Rachel, who was standing with Edgeworth Bess near the door.

"I shall go back and finish my supper," said Mrs. Maggot.

"And so shall I," replied Edgeworth Bess.

"Stop a minute," cried Jack, detaining his mistresses. "Here we part—perhaps for ever. I've already told you I'm about to take a long journey, and it's more than probable I shall never return."

"Don't say so," cried Mrs. Maggot. "I should be perfectly miserable if I thought you in earnest."

"The very idea is dreadful," whimpered Edgeworth Bess.

"Farewell!" cried Jack, embracing them. "Take this key to Baptist Kettleby. On seeing it, he'll deliver you a box, which it will unlock, and in which you'll find a matter of fifty guineas and a few trinkets. Divide the money between you, and wear the ornaments for my sake. But, if you've a spark of love for me, don't meddle with anything in that house."

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed both ladies together.

"Farewell!" cried Jack, breaking from them, and rushing down the street.

"What shall we do, Poll?" hesitated Edgeworth Bess.

"Go in, to be sure, simpleton," replied Mrs. Maggot, "and bring off all we can. I know where everything valuable is kept. Since Jack has left us, what does it matter whether he's pleased or not?"

At this moment, a whistle was heard.

"Coming!" cried Blueskin, who was still lingering with Rachel. "The captain's in such a desperate hurry that there's no time for love-making. Adieu! my charmer. You'll find those young ladies extremely agreeable acquaintances. Adieu!"

And, snatching a hasty kiss, he darted after Jack.

The chair, meanwhile, with its unhappy load, was transported at a brisk pace to Newgate. Arrived there, the porters thundered at the massive door of the Lodge, which was instantly opened—Shotbolt's note having

been received just before. All the turnkeys were assembled.

Ireton and Langley had returned from a second unsuccessful search; Marvel had come thither to bid good-night to Mrs. Spurling; Austin had never quitted his post. The tapstress was full of curiosity, but she appeared more easy than the others. Behind her stood Caliban, chuckling to himself, and grinning from ear to ear.

"Well, who'd have thought of Shotbolt beating us all in this way!" said Ireton. "I'm sorry for old Newgate that another gaol should have it. It's infernally provoking."

"Infernally provoking," echoed Langley.

"Nobody has so much cause for complaint as me," growled Austin. "I've lost my wager."

"Twenty pounds," rejoined Mrs. Spurling. "I witnessed the bet."

"Here he is," cried Ireton, as the knocking was heard without. "Get ready the irons, Caliban."

"Wait a bit, massa," replied the grinning negro—"lilly bit—see all right fust."

By this time the chair had been brought into the Lodge.

"You've got him?" demanded Ireton.

"Safe inside," replied the chairman, wiping the heat from his brow; "we've run all the way."

"Where's Mr. Shotbolt?" asked Austin.

"The gen'l'man'll be here directly. He was detained. T'other gen'l'man said the letter 'ud explain all."

"Detained," echoed Marvel. "That's odd. But let us see the prisoner."

The chair was then opened.

"Shotbolt! by ——" cried Austin, as the captive was dragged forth. "I've won after all." Exclamations of wonder burst from all. Mrs. Spurling bit her lips to conceal her mirth. Caliban absolutely crowed with delight.

"Hear the letter," said Ireton, breaking the seal. "' *This is the way in which I will serve all who attempt to apprehend me.*' It is signed JACK SHEPPARD."

"And so Jack Sheppard has sent back Shotbolt in this pickle," said Langley.

"So it appears," replied Marvel. "Untie his arms, and take off that handkerchief. The poor fellow's half smothered."

"I guess what share you've had in this," whispered Austin to Mrs. Spurling.

"Never mind," replied the tapstress. "You've won your wager."

Half-an-hour after this occurrence, when it had been sufficiently laughed at and discussed; when the wager had been settled, and the chairmen dismissed with the remaining three guineas, which Shotbolt was compelled to pay; Ireton arose, and signified his intention of stepping across the street to inform Mr. Wild of the circumstance.

"As it's getting late, and the porter may be gone to bed," he observed, "I'll take the pass-key, and let myself in. Mr. Wild is sure to be up. He never retires to rest till daybreak—if at all. Come with me, Langley, and bring the lantern."

XIV

How Jack Sheppard was again Captured.

JACK SHEPPARD, after whistling to Blueskin, hurried down a short thoroughfare leading from Wyeh Street to the back of Saint Clement's Church, where he found Thames Darrell, who advanced to meet him.

"I was just going," said Thames. "When I parted from you at Mr. Kneebone's door, you begged me to

await your return here, assuring me you would not detain me five minutes. Instead of which, more than half-an-hour has elapsed."

"You won't complain of the delay, when I tell you what I've done," answered Jack. "I've obtained two packets containing letters from Sir Rowland Trenchard, which I've no doubt will establish your title to the estates. Take them, and may they prove as serviceable to you as I desire."

"Jack," replied Thames, greatly moved, "I wish I could devise any means of brightening your own dark prospects."

"That's impossible," replied Jack. "I am utterly lost."

"Not utterly," rejoined the other.

"Utterly," reiterated Jack gloomily—"as regards all I hold dear. Listen to me, Thames. I'm about to leave this country for ever. Having ascertained that a vessel sails for France from the river at daybreak to-morrow morning, I have secured a passage in her, and have already had the few effects I possess conveyed on board. Blueskin goes with me. The faithful fellow will never leave me."

"Never, while I've breath in my body, captain," rejoined Blueskin, who had joined them. "England or France, London or Paris, it's all one to me, so I've you to command me."

"Stand out of earshot," rejoined his leader. "I'll call you when you're wanted."

And Blueskin withdrew.

"I cannot but approve the course you are about to take, Jack," said Thames, "though on some accounts I regret it. In after years you can return to your own country—to your friends."

"Never," replied Sheppard bitterly. "My friends need not fear my return. They shall hear of me no more. Under another name—not my own hateful one

—I will strive to distinguish myself in some foreign service, and win myself a reputation, or perish honourably. But I will never—never return.”

“I will not attempt to combat your resolution, Jack,” returned Thames, after a pause. “But I dread the effect your departure may have upon your poor mother. Her life hangs upon a thread, and this may snap it.”

“I wish you hadn’t mentioned her,” said Jack, in a broken voice, while his whole frame shook with emotion. “What I do is for the best, and I can only hope she may have strength to bear the separation. You must say farewell to her, for I cannot. I don’t ask you to supply my place—for that is perhaps impossible. But be like a son to her.”

“Do not doubt me,” replied Thames, warmly pressing his hand.

“And now, I’ve one further request,” faltered Jack, “though I scarcely know how to make it. It is to set me right with Winifred. Do not let her think worse of me than I deserve—or even so ill. Tell her, that more than once, when about to commit some desperate offence, I have been restrained by her gentle image. If hopeless love for her made me a robber, it has also saved me many a crime. Will you tell her that?”

“I will,” replied Thames earnestly.

“Enough,” said Jack, recovering his composure. “And now to your own concerns. Blueskin, who has been on the watch all night, has dogged Sir Rowland Trenchard to Jonathan Wild’s house; and, from the mysterious manner in which he was admitted by the thief-taker’s confidential servant, Abraham Mendez, and not by the regular porter, there is little doubt but they are alone, and probably making some arrangements prior to our uncle’s departure from England.”

“Is he leaving England?” demanded Thames in astonishment.

“He sails to-morrow morning, in the very vessel by

which I start," replied Jack. "Now if, as I suspect—from the documents just placed in your possession—Sir Rowland meditates doing you justice after his departure, it is possible his intentions may be frustrated by the machinations of Wild, whose interest is obviously to prevent such an occurrence, unless we can surprise them together, and, by proving to Sir Rowland that we possess the power of compelling a restitution of your rights, force the other treacherous villain into compliance. Jonathan, in all probability, knows nothing of these packets; and their production may serve to intimidate him. Will you venture?"

"It is a hazardous experiment," said Thames, after a moment's reflection; "but I will make it. You must not, however, accompany me, Jack. The risk I run is nothing to yours."

"I care for no risk, provided I can serve you," rejoined Sheppard. "Besides, you'll not be able to get in without me. It won't do to knock at the door, and Jonathan Wild's house is not quite so easy of entrance as Mr. Wood's."

"I understand," replied Thames; "be it as you will."

"Then we'll lose no more time," returned Jack. "Come along, Blueskin."

Starting at a rapid pace in the direction of the Old Bailey, and crossing Fleet Bridge, "for oyster tubs renowned," the trio skirted the right bank of the muddy stream until they reached Fleet Lane, up which they hurried.

Turning off again on the left, down Seacoal Lane, they arrived at the mouth of a dark narrow alley, into which they plunged; and, at the farther extremity, found a small yard, overlooked by the blank walls of a large gloomy habitation. A door in this house opened upon the yard. Jack tried it, and found it locked.

"If I had my old tools with me, we'd soon master

this obstacle," he muttered. "We shall be obliged to force it."

"Try the cellar, captain," said Blueskin, stamping upon a large board in the ground. "Here's the door. This is the way the old thief brings in all his heavy plunder, which he stows in out-of-the-way holes in his infernal dwelling. I've seen him often do it."

While making these remarks, Blueskin contrived, by means of a chisel which he chanced to have about him, to lift up the board, and introducing his fingers beneath it, with Jack's assistance speedily opened it altogether, disclosing a dark hole, into which he leapt.

"Follow me, Thames," cried Jack, dropping into the chasm.

They were now in a sort of cellar, at one end of which was a door. It was fastened inside. But, taking the chisel from Blueskin, Jack quickly forced back the bolt.

As they entered the room beyond, a fierce growl was heard.

"Let me go first," said Blueskin; "the dogs know me. Soho! boys."

And, walking up to the animals, which were chained to the wall, they instantly recognised him, and suffered the others to pass without barking.

Groping their way through one or two dark and mouldy-smelling vaults, the party ascended a flight of steps, which brought them to the hall.

As Jack conjectured, no one was there; and, though a lamp was burning on a stand, they decided upon proceeding without it. They then swiftly mounted upon the stairs, and stopped before the audience-chamber. Applying his ear to the keyhole, Jack listened, but could detect no sound. He next cautiously tried the door, but found it fastened inside.

"I fear we're too late," he whispered to Thames. "But we'll soon see. Give me the chisel, Blueskin."

And dexterously applying the implement, he forced open the lock.

They then entered the room, which was perfectly dark.

"This is strange," said Jack, under his breath. "Sir Rowland must be gone. And yet, I don't know. The key's in the lock, on the inner side. Be on your guard."

"I am so," replied Thames, who had followed him closely.

"Shall I fetch the light, captain?" whispered Blueskin.

"Yes," replied Jack. "I don't know how it is," he added, in a low voice, to Thames, as they were left alone, "but I've a strange foreboding of ill. My heart fails me. I almost wish we hadn't come."

As he said this, he moved forward a few paces, when, finding his feet glued to the ground by some adhesive substance, he stooped to feel what it was, but instantly withdrew his hand, with an exclamation of horror.

"God in heaven!" he cried, "the floor is covered with blood. Some foul murder has been committed! The light!—the light!"

Astounded at his cries, Thames sprang towards him. At this moment, Blueskin appeared with the lamp, and revealed a horrible spectacle—the floor deluged with blood—various articles of furniture upset—papers scattered about—the murdered man's cloak, trampled upon and smeared with gore—his hat crushed and similarly stained—his sword—the ensanguined cloth—with several other ghastly evidences of the slaughterous deed. Farther on, there were impressions of bloody footsteps along the floor.

"Sir Rowland is murdered!" cried Jack, as soon as he could find a tongue.

"It is plain he has been destroyed by his perfidious

accomplice," rejoined Thames. "O God! how fearfully my father is avenged!"

"True," replied Jack sternly; "but we have our uncle to avenge. What's this?" he added, stooping to pick up a piece of paper lying at his feet—it was Jonathan's memorandum. "This is the explanation of the bloody deed."

"Here's a pocket-book full of notes, and a heavy bag of gold," said Blueskin, examining the articles on the floor.

"The sum which incited the villain to the murder," replied Jack. "But he can't be far off. He must be gone to dispose of the body. We shall have him on his return."

"I'll see where these footsteps lead to," said Blueskin, holding the light to the door. "Here are some more papers, captain."

"Give them to me," replied Jack. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "a letter, beginning 'Dearest Aliva'—that's your mother's name, Thames."

"Let me see it," cried Thames, snatching it from him. "It *is* addressed to my mother," he added, as his eye glanced rapidly over it, "and by my father. At length I shall ascertain my name. Bring the light this way—quick! I cannot decipher the signature."

Jack was about to comply with the request, when an unlooked-for interruption occurred. Having traced the footsteps to the wall, and perceiving no outlet, Blueskin elevated the lamp, and discovered marks of bloody fingers on the boards.

"He must have gone this way," muttered Blueskin. "I've often heard of a secret door in this room, though I never saw it. It must be somewhere hereabouts. Ah!" he exclaimed, as his eye fell upon a small knob in the wall, "there's the spring!"

He touched it, and the door flew open. The next moment he was felled to the ground by Jonathan

Wild, who sprang into the room, followed by Abraham, bearing the link.

A single glance served to show the thief-taker how matters stood. From the slight sounds that had reached him in his place of confinement, he was aware that some persons had found their way to the scene of slaughter, and in a state of the most intense anxiety awaited the result of their investigation, prepared for the worst. Hearing the spring touched he dashed through on the instant, and struck down the person who presented himself, with his bludgeon. On beholding the intruders, his fears changed to exultation, and he uttered a roar of satisfaction as he glared at them, which could only be likened to the cry of some savage denizen of the plains.

On his appearance, Jack levelled a pistol at his head. But his hand was withheld by Thames.

"Don't fire," cried the latter. "It is important not to slay him. He shall expiate his offences on the gibbet. You are my prisoner, murderer."

"*Your* prisoner!" echoed Jonathan derisively. "You mistake, you are mine. And so is your companion—the convict Sheppard."

"Waste not another word with him, Thames," cried Jack. "Upon him."

"Yield, villain, or die!" shouted Thames, drawing his sword, and springing towards him.

"There's my answer!" rejoined Wild, hurling the bludgeon at him, with such fatal effect, that, striking him on the head, it brought him instantly to the ground.

"Ah! traitor!" cried Jack, pulling the trigger of his pistol.

Anticipating this, Wild avoided the shot by suddenly ducking his head. He had a narrow escape, however; for, passing within an inch of him, the bullet buried itself deeply in the wall. Before he could fire a second shot, Jack had to defend himself from the thief-taker,

who, with his drawn hanger furiously assaulted him. Eluding the blow, Jack plucked his sword from the scabbard, and a desperate conflict began.

"Pick up that blade, Nab," vociferated Wild, finding himself hotly pressed, "and stab him. I won't give him a chance."

"Cowardly villain!" cried Jack, as the Jew, obeying the orders of his principal, snatched up the weapon of the murdered man, and assailed him. "But I'll yet disappoint you."

And, springing backwards, he darted suddenly through the door.

"After him," cried Wild; "he mustn't escape. Dead or alive, I'll have him. Bring the link."

And, followed by Abraham, he rushed out of the room.

Just as Jack got half way down the stairs, and Wild and the Jew reached the upper landing, the street-door was opened by Langley and Ireton, the latter of whom carried a lantern.

"Stop him!" shouted Jonathan from the stair-head, "stop him! It's Jack Sheppard!"

"Give way!" cried Jack fiercely. "I'll cut down him who opposes me."

The head turnkey, in all probability, would have obeyed. But, being pushed forward by his subordinate officer, he was compelled to make a stand.

"You'd better surrender quietly, Jack," he cried; "you've no chance."

Instead of regarding him, Jack glanced over the iron banisters, and measured the distance. But the fall was too great, and he abandoned the attempt.

"We have him!" cried Jonathan, hurrying down the steps. "He can't escape."

As this was said, Jack turned with the swiftness of thought, and shortening his sword, prepared to plunge it into the thief-taker's heart. Before he could make

the thrust, however, he was seized behind by Ireton, who flung himself upon him.

"Caught!" shouted the head turnkey. "I give you joy of the capture, Mr. Wild," he added, as Jonathan came up and assisted him to secure and disarm the prisoner. "I was coming to give you intelligence of a comical trick played by this rascal, when I find him here—the last place, I own, where I should have expected to find him."

"You've arrived in the very nick of time," rejoined Jonathan; "and I'll take care your services are not overlooked."

"Mr. Ireton," cried Jack, in accents of the most urgent entreaty, "before you take me hence, I implore you—if you would further the ends of justice—search this house. One of the most barbarous murders ever committed has just been perpetrated by the monster Wild. You will find proofs of the bloody deed in his room. But go thither at once, I beseech you, before he has time to remove them."

"Mr. Ireton is welcome to search every room in my house if he pleases," said Jonathan, in a tone of bravado. "As soon as we've conveyed you to Newgate, I'll accompany him."

"Mr. Ireton will do no such thing," replied the head turnkey. "Bless your soul! d'ye think I'm to be gammoned by such nonsense? Not I. I'm not such a greenhorn as Shotbolt, Jack, whatever you may think."

"For mercy's sake, go upstairs," implored Sheppard. "I have not told you half. There's a man dying—Captain Darrell. Take me with you. Place a pistol to my ear, and shoot me, if I've told you false."

"And what good would that do?" replied Ireton sarcastically. "To shoot you would be to lose the reward. You act your part capitally, but it won't do."

"Won't you go?" cried Jack passionately. "Mr. Langley, I appeal to you. Murder, I say, has been

done! Another murder will be committed, if you don't prevent it. The blood will rest on your head. Do you hear me, sir? Won't you stir?"

"Not a step," replied Langley gruffly.

"Off with him to Newgate!" cried Jonathan. "Ireton, as you captured him, the reward is yours. But I request that a third may be given to Langley."

"It shall be, sir," replied Ireton, bowing. "Now come along, Jack."

"Miscreants!" cried Sheppard, almost driven frantic by the violence of his emotions; "you're all in league with him."

"Away with him!" cried Jonathan. "I'll see him fettered myself. Remain at the door, Nab," he added, loitering for a moment behind the others, "and let no one in or out."

Jack, meanwhile, was carried to Newgate. Austin could scarcely credit his senses when he beheld him. Shotbolt, who had in some degree recovered from the effects of his previous mortification, was thrown into an ecstasy of delight, and could not sufficiently exult over the prisoner. Mrs. Spurling had retired for the night. Jack appealed to the new auditors, and again detailed his story, but with no better success than heretofore. His statement was treated with derision. Having seen him heavily ironed, and placed in the Condemned Hold, Jonathan recrossed the street.

He found Abraham on guard as he had left him.

"Has any one been here?" he asked.

"No von," replied the Jew.

"That's well," replied Wild, entering the house, and fastening the door. "And now to dispose of our dead. Why, Nab, you shake as if you'd got an ague?" he added, turning to the Jew, whose teeth chattered audibly.

"I haven't quite recovered the fright I got in the Vell Hole," replied Abraham.

On returning to the audience-chamber, Jonathan found the inanimate body of Thames Darrell lying where he had left it ; but, on examining it, he remarked that the pockets were turned inside out, and had evidently been rifled. Startled by this circumstance, he looked around, and perceived that the trap-door—which has been mentioned as communicating with a secret staircase—was open.

He next discovered that Blueskin was gone ; and, pursuing his scrutiny, found that he had carried off all the bank-notes, gold, and letters—including, what Jonathan himself was not aware of, the two packets which he had abstracted from the person of Thames.

Uttering a terrible imprecation, Jonathan snatched up the link, and hastily descended the stairs, leaving the Jew behind him. After a careful search below, he could detect no trace of Blueskin. But, finding the cellar-door open, concluded he had got out that way.

Returning to the audience-chamber in a by no means enviable state of mind, he commanded the Jew to throw the body of Thames into the Well Hole. “You musht do dat shob yourself, Mishter Vild,” rejoined Abraham, shaking his head. “No pripe shall indush me to enter dat horrid plashe again.”

“Fool !” cried Wild, taking up the body, “what are you afraid of ? After all,” he added, pausing, “he may be of more use to me alive than dead.” Adhering to this change of plan, he ordered Abraham to follow him, and, descending the secret stairs once more, carried the wounded man into the lower part of the premises. Unlocking several doors, he came to a dark vault, that would have rivalled the gloomiest cell in Newgate, into which he thrust Thames, and fastened the door.

“Go to the pump, Nab,” he said, when this was done, “and fill a pail with water. We must wash

out those stains upstairs, and burn the cloth. Blood, they say, won't come out. But I never found any truth in the saying. When I've had an hour's rest, I'll be after Blueskin."

XV

How Blueskin underwent the Peine Forte et Dure.

As soon as it became known, through the medium of the public prints on the following day, that Jack Sheppard had broken out of prison, and had been again captured during the night, fresh curiosity was excited, and larger crowds than ever flocked to Newgate, in the hope of obtaining admission to his cell; but, by the governor's express commands, Wild having privately counselled the step, no one was allowed to see him.

A question next arose whether the prisoner could be executed under the existing warrant—some inclining to one opinion, some to another. To settle the point, the governor started to Windsor, delegating his trust in the interim to Wild, who took advantage of his brief rule to adopt the harshest measures towards the prisoner. He had him removed from the Condemned Hold, stripped of his fine apparel, clothed in the most sordid rags, loaded with additional fetters, and thrust into the Stone Hold—already described as the most noisome cell in the whole prison. Here, without a glimpse of daylight; visited by no one except Austin at stated intervals, who neither answered a question nor addressed a word to him; fed upon the worst diet, literally mouldy bread and ditch-water; surrounded by stone walls; with a flagged floor for his pillow, and without so much as a blanket to protect him from the

death-like cold that pierced his frame—Jack's stout heart was subdued, and he fell into the deepest dejection, ardently longing for the time when even a violent death should terminate his suffering.

But it was not so ordered. Mr. Pitt returned with intelligence that the warrant was delayed, and, on taking the opinion of two eminent lawyers of the day, Sir William Thomson and Mr. Serjeant Raby, it was decided that it must be proved, in a regular and judicial manner, that Sheppard was the identical person who had been convicted and had escaped, before a fresh order could be made for his execution; and that the matter must, therefore, stand over until the next sessions, to be held at the Old Bailey in October, when it could be brought before the court.

The unfortunate prisoner, meanwhile, who was not informed of the respite, languished in his horrible dungeon, and, at the expiration of three weeks, became so seriously indisposed that it was feared he could not long survive. He refused his food, and even when better provisions were offered him rejected them.

As his death was by no means what Jonathan desired, he resolved to remove him to a more airy ward, and afford him such slight comforts as might tend to his restoration, or at least keep him alive until the period of execution.

With this view Jack was carried—for he was no longer able to move without assistance—to a ward called the Castle, situated over the gateway on the western side, in what was considered the strongest part of the gaol. The walls were of immense thickness; the small windows double-grated and unglazed; the fireplace was without a grate; and a barrack-bed, divided into two compartments, occupied one corner. It was about twelve feet high, nine wide, and fourteen long, and was approached by double doors, each six inches thick.

As Jack appeared to be sinking fast, his fetters were removed, his own clothes were returned to him, and he was allowed a mattress and a scanty supply of bed-linen. Mrs. Spurling attended him as his nurse, and under her care he speedily revived. As soon as he became convalescent, and all fears of his premature dissolution were at an end, Wild recommenced his rigorous treatment. The bedding was removed, Mrs. Spurling was no longer allowed to visit him, he was again loaded with irons, fastened by an enormous horse-padlock to a staple in the floor, and only allowed to take repose in a chair. A single blanket constituted his sole covering at night. In spite of all this he grew daily better and stronger, and his spirits revived.

Hitherto no visitors had been permitted to see him. As the time when his identity had to be proved approached, this rigour was, in a trifling degree, relaxed, and a few persons were occasionally admitted to the ward, but only in the presence of Austin. From none of these could Jack ascertain what had become of Thames; or learn any particulars concerning the family at Dollis Hill, or of his mother. Austin, who had been evidently schooled by Wild, maintained a profound silence on this head. In this way more than a month passed over. October arrived, and in another week the court would be sitting at the Old Bailey.

One night, about this time, just as Austin was about to lock the great gate, Jonathan Wild and his two janizaries entered the Lodge with a prisoner bound hand and foot. It was Blueskin. On the cords being removed, he made a desperate spring at Wild, bore him to the ground, clutched at his throat, and would infallibly have strangled him, if the keepers had not all thrown themselves upon him, and by main force torn him off. His struggles were so violent, that, being a man of tremendous strength, it was some time before they could master him, and it required the combined

efforts of all the four partners to put him into irons. It appeared from what he said that he had been captured when asleep—that his liquor had been drugged—otherwise, he would never have allowed himself to be taken alive. Wild, he asserted, had robbed him of a large sum of money, and until it was restored he would never plead.

“We’ll see that,” replied Jonathan. “Take him to the Bilbowes. Put him in the stocks, and there let him sleep off his drunken fit. Whether he pleads or not he shall swing with his confederate, Jack Sheppard.”

At this allusion to his leader a shudder passed through Blueskin’s athletic frame.

“Where is he?” he cried. “Let me see him. Let me have a word with him, and you may take all the money.”

Jonathan made no answer, but motioned the partners to take him away.

As soon as Blueskin was removed, Wild intimated his intention of visiting the Castle. He was accompanied by Ireton and Austin. The massive door was unlocked, and they entered the cell. What was their surprise to find it vacant, and the prisoner gone! Jonathan could scarcely believe his eyes. He looked fiercely and inquiringly from one to the other of his companions; but, though both of them were excessively frightened, neither appeared guilty. Before a word could be said, however, a slight noise was heard in the chimney, and Jack, with his irons on, descended from it. Without betraying the slightest confusion, or making a single remark, he quietly resumed his seat.

“Amazement!” cried Wild. “How has he unfastened his padlock? Austin, it must be owing to your negligence.”

“My negligence, Mr. Wild,” said the turnkey, trembling in every joint. “I assure you, sir, when I left

him an hour ago, it was locked. I tried it myself, sir. I'm as much astonished as you. But I can't account for it!"

"At all events, you shall answer for it," thundered Wild, with a bitter imprecation.

"He's not to blame," said Jack, rising. "I opened the padlock with this crooked nail, which I found in the floor. If you had arrived ten minutes later, or if there hadn't been an iron bar in the chimney, that hindered my progress, I should have been beyond your reach."

"You talk boldly," replied Wild. "Go to the Iron Hold, Austin, and tell two of the partners to bring another padlock of the largest size, and the heaviest handcuffs they can find. We'll try whether he'll get loose again."

Sheppard said nothing, but a disdainful smile curled his lips.

Austin departed, and presently afterwards returned with the two subordinate officers, each of whom wore a leathern apron round his waist, and carried a large hammer. As soon as the manacles were slipped over the prisoner's wrists, and the new padlock secured to the staple, they withdrew.

"Leave me alone with him a moment," said Jonathan. And the gaolers also retired.

"Jack," said Wild, with a glance of malignant triumph, "I will now tell you what I have done. All my plans have succeeded. Before a month has elapsed your mother will be mine. The Trenchard estates will likewise be mine, for Sir Rowland is no more, and the youth, Thames, will never again see daylight. Blueskin, who had evaded me, with the papers and the money, is a prisoner here, and will perish on the same gallows as yourself. My vengeance is completely gratified."

Without waiting for a reply, but darting a malevolent look at the prisoner, he quitted the cell, the door of which was instantly double-locked and bolted.

"I've not quite done yet," said Jonathan, as he joined the turnkeys. "I should like to see whether Blueskin is a little more composed. I've a question to ask him. Give me the keys and the light. I'll go alone."

So saying, he descended a short spiral staircase, and, entering a long stone gallery, from which several other passages branched, took one of them, and after various turnings—for he was familiar with all the intricacies of the prison—arrived at the cell of which he was in search.

Selecting a key from the heavy bunch committed to him by Austin, he threw open the door, and beheld Blueskin seated at the back of the small chamber, handcuffed, and with his feet confined in a heavy pair of stocks. He was asleep when Jonathan entered, and growled at being disturbed. But, as soon as he perceived who it was, he roused himself, and glared fiercely at the intruder from under his bent brows.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a gruff voice.

"I want to know what you've done with the rest of the notes—with the gold—and the papers you took away from my room!" rejoined Wild.

"Then you'll never know more than this," retorted Blueskin, with a grin of satisfaction—"they're in a place of safety, where *you'll* never find 'em, but where somebody else *will*, and that before long."

"Hear me, Blueskin," said Jonathan, restraining his choler. "If you'll tell me where to look for these things, and I *do* find them, I'll set you free. And you shall have a share of the gold for yourself."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," rejoined the other. "Set Captain Sheppard free, and when I hear he's safe—not before—I'll put the money and papers into your possession, and some other matters, too, that you know nothing about.

"Impracticable dolt!" exclaimed Jonathan furiously.

“Do you think I’d part with the sweetest morsel of revenge on those terms? No! But I’ll have the secret out of you by other means.”

So saying, he violently shut and locked the door.

About ten days after this interview, Blueskin, having been indicted by Wild for several robberies, and true bills found against him, was placed at the bar of the Old Bailey to be arraigned; when he declared that he would not plead to the indictment, unless the sum of five hundred pounds, taken from him by Jonathan Wild, was first restored to him. This sum, claimed by Wild under the statute, 4th and 5th of William and Mary, intituled “*An Act for encouraging the apprehending of Highwaymen,*” was granted to him by the court.

As Blueskin still continued obstinate, the judgment appointed to be executed upon such prisoners as stood mute was then read. It was as follows, and, when uttered, produced a strong effect upon all who heard it, except the prisoner, who, in no respect, altered his sullen and dogged demeanour.

“Prisoner at the bar,” thus ran the sentence, “you shall be taken to the prison from whence you came, and put into a mean room, stopped from the light; and shall there be laid on the bare ground, without any litter, straw, or other covering, and without any garment. You shall lie upon your back; your head shall be covered; and your feet shall be bare. One of your arms shall be drawn to one side of the room, and the other arm to the other side; and your legs shall be served in a like manner. Then, there shall be laid upon your body as much iron or stone as you can bear, and more. And the first day you shall have three morsels of barley bread, without any drink; and the second day you shall be allowed to drink as much as you can, at three times, of the water that is next to the prison-door, except running-water, without any bread. And this shall be your diet till you die.”

"Prisoner at the bar," continued the clerk of the court, "he against whom this judgment is given forfeits his goods to the king."

An awful silence prevailed throughout the court. Every eye was fixed upon the prisoner. But, as he made no answer, he was removed.

Before the full sentence was carried into execution, he was taken into a small room adjoining the court. Here Marvel, the executioner, who was in attendance, was commanded by Wild to tie his thumbs together, which he did with whiplcord, so tightly, that the string cut to the bone. But, as this produced no effect, and did not even elicit a groan, the prisoner was carried back to Newgate.

The Press Room, to which Blueskin was conveyed on his arrival at the gaol, was a small square chamber, walled and paved with stone. In each corner stood a stout square post reaching to the ceiling. To these a heavy wooden apparatus was attached, which could be raised or lowered at pleasure by pulleys. In the floor was set four ring-bolts, about nine feet apart.

When the prisoner was brought into this room he was again questioned; but, continuing contumacious, preparations were made for inflicting the torture. His great personal strength being so well known, it was deemed prudent by Marvel to have all the four partners, together with Caliban, in attendance. The prisoner, however, submitted more quietly than was anticipated. He allowed his irons and clothes to be taken off without resistance. But just as they were about to place him on the ground, he burst from their hold, and made a desperate spring at Jonathan, who was standing with his arms folded near the door, watching the scene. The attempt was unsuccessful. He was instantly overpowered, and stretched upon the ground. The four men fell upon him, holding his arms and legs, while Caliban forced back his head.

In this state, he contrived to get the poor black's hand into his mouth, and nearly bit off one of his fingers before the sufferer could be rescued.

Meanwhile, the executioner had attached strong cords to his ankles and wrists, and fastened them tightly to the iron rings. This done, he unloosed the pulley, and the ponderous machine, which resembled a trough, slowly descended upon the prisoner's breast. Marvel then took two iron weights, each of a hundred pounds, and placed them in the press.

As this seemed insufficient, after a lapse of five minutes, he added another hundredweight. The prisoner breathed with difficulty. Still, his robust frame enabled him to hold out. After he had endured this torture for an hour, at a sign from Wild another hundredweight was added. In a few minutes, an appalling change was perceptible. The veins in his throat and forehead swelled and blackened; his eyes protruded from their sockets, and stared wildly; a thick damp gathered on his brow; and blood gushed from his mouth, nostrils, and ears.

"Water!" he gasped.

The executioner shook his head.

"Do you submit?" interrogated Wild. Blueskin answered by dashing his head violently against the flagged floor. His efforts at self-destruction were, however, prevented.

"Try fifty pounds more," said Jonathan.

"Stop," groaned Blueskin.

"Will you plead?" demanded Wild harshly.

"I will," answered the prisoner.

"Release him," said Jonathan. "We have cured his obstinacy, you perceive," he added to Marvel.

"I *will* live," cried Blueskin, with a look of the deadliest hatred at Wild, "to be revenged on you."

And, as the weights were removed, he fainted.

XVI

How Jack Sheppard's Portrait was Painted.

EARLY in the morning of Thursday, the 15th of October 1724, the door of the Castle was opened by Austin, who, with a look of unusual importance, announced to the prisoner that four gentlemen were shortly coming up with the governor to see him—"four *such* gentlemen," he added, in a tone meant to impress his auditor with a due sense of the honour intended him, "as you don't meet every day."

"Is Mr. Wood among them?" asked Jack eagerly.

"Mr. Wood!—no," replied the turnkey. "Do you think I'd take the trouble to announce *him*? These are persons of consequence, I tell you."

"Who are they?" inquired Sheppard.

"Why, first," rejoined Austin, "there's Sir James Thornhill, historical painter to his majesty, and the greatest artist of the day. Those grand designs in the dome of Saint Paul's are his work. So is the roof of the state room at Hampton Court Palace, occupied by Queen Anne and the Prince of Denmark. So is the Chapel of All Souls at Oxford, and the great hall at Blenheim, and I don't know how many halls and chapels besides. He's now engaged on the Hall at Greenwich Hospital."

"I've heard of him," replied Jack impatiently. "Who are the others?"

"Let me see. There's a friend of Sir James—a young man, an engraver of masquerade tickets and caricatures—his name, I believe, is Hogarth. Then there's Mr. Gay, the poet, who wrote 'The Captives,' which was lately acted at Drury Lane, and was so much admired by the Princess of Wales. And, lastly, there's

Mr. Figg, the noted prize-fighter, from the New Amphitheatre in Marylebone Fields."

"Figg's an old friend of mine," rejoined Jack; "he was my instructor in the small sword and backsword exercise. I'm glad he's come to see me."

"You don't inquire what brings Sir James Thornhill here?" said Austin.

"Curiosity, I suppose," returned Jack carelessly.

"No such thing," rejoined the gaoler; "he's coming on business."

"On what business, in the name of wonder?" asked Sheppard.

"To paint your portrait," answered the gaoler.

"My portrait!" echoed Jack.

"By desire of his majesty," said the gaoler consequentially. "He has heard of your wonderful escapes, and wishes to see what you're like. There's a feather in your cap. No housebreaker was ever so highly honoured before."

"And have my escapes really made so much noise as to reach the ear of royalty?" mused Jack. "I have done nothing—nothing to what I *could* do—to what I *will* do."

"You've done quite enough," rejoined Austin; "more than you'll ever do again."

"And then to be taken thus, in these disgraceful bonds," continued Jack, "to be held up as a sight for ever."

"Why, how else would you be taken?" exclaimed the gaoler, with a coarse laugh. "It's very well Mr. Wild allowed you to have your fine clothes again, or you might have been taken in a still more disgraceful garb. For my part, I think those shackles extremely becoming. But here they are."

Voices being heard at the door, Austin flew to open it, and admitted Mr. Pitt, the governor, a tall, pompous personage, who, in his turn, ushered in four other individuals.

The first of these, whom he addressed as Mr. Gay, was a stout, good-looking, good-humoured man, about thirty-six, with a dark complexion, an oval face, fine black eyes, full of fire and sensibility, and twinkling with roguish humour—an expression fully borne out by the mouth, which had a very shrewd and sarcastic curl.

The poet's appearance altogether was highly prepossessing. With a strong tendency to satire, but without a particle of malice or ill-nature in its display, Gay, by his strokes of pleasantry, whether in his writings or conversation, never lost a friend. On the contrary, he was a universal favourite, and numbered amongst his intimate acquaintances the choicest spirits of the time—Pope, Swift, Arbuthnot, and “all the better brothers.” His demeanour was polished; his manners singularly affable and gentle; and he was remarkable for the generosity of his temper.

In worldly matters Gay was not fortunate. Possessed at one time of a share in the South Sea Stock, he conceived himself worth twenty thousand pounds. But, on the bursting of that bubble, his hopes vanished with it. Neither did his interest—which was by no means inconsiderable—nor his general popularity, procure him the preferment he desired. A constant attendant at court, he had the mortification to see every one promoted but himself, and thus bewails his ill-luck—

“Places, I found, were daily given away,
And yet no friendly gazette mentioned Gay.”

The prodigious success of the “Beggars’ Opera,” which was produced about four years after the date of this history, rewarded him for all his previous disappointments, though it did not fully justify the well-known epigram, alluding to himself and the manager, and “make Gay *rich*, and Rich *gay*.” At the time of his present introduction, his play of “The Captives”

had just been produced at Drury Lane, and he was meditating his "Fables," which were published two years afterwards.

Behind the poet came Sir James Thornhill. The eminent painter had handsome expressive features, an aquiline nose, and a good deal of dignity in his manner. His age was not far from fifty. He was accompanied by a young man of about seven-and-twenty, who carried his easel, set it in its place, laid the canvas upon it, opened the paint-box, took out the brushes and palette, and, in short, paid him the most assiduous attention.

This young man, whose features, though rather plain and coarse, bore the strongest impress of genius, and who had a dark-grey, penetrating eye, so quick in its glances that it seemed to survey twenty objects at once, and yet only to fasten upon one, bore the honoured name of William Hogarth. Why he paid so much attention to Sir James Thornhill may be explained anon.

The rear of the party was brought up by a large, powerfully built man, with a bluff, honest, but rugged countenance, slashed with many a cut and scar, and stamped with that surly, sturdy, bulldog-like look which an Englishman always delights to contemplate, because he conceives it to be characteristic of his countrymen.

This formidable person, who was no other than the renowned Figg, the "Atlas of the sword," as he is termed by Captain Godfrey, had removed his hat and "skull-covering," and was wiping the heat from his bepatched and close-shaven pate. His shirt also was unbuttoned, and disclosed a neck like that of an ox, and a chest which might have served as a model for a Hercules. He had a flattish, perhaps it should be called a *flattened*, nose, and a brown leathern-looking hide, that seemed as if it had not unfrequently under-

gone the process of tanning. Under his arm he carried a thick, knotted crab-stick. The above description of—

The great Figg, by the prize-fighting swains,
Sole monarch acknowledged of Mary'bone plains—

may sound somewhat tame by the side of the glowing account given of him by his gallant biographer, who asserts that "there was a majesty shone in his countenance, and blazed in his actions, beyond all I ever saw;" but it may, possibly, convey a more accurate notion of his personal appearance.

James Figg was the most perfect master of self-defence of his day. Seconded by his strength and temper, his skill rendered him invincible, and he is reputed never to have lost a battle. His imperturbable demeanour in the fight has been well portrayed by Captain Godfrey, who here condescends to lay aside his stilts. "His right leg bold and firm, and his left, which could hardly ever be disturbed, gave him a surprising advantage, and struck his adversary with despair and panic. He had a peculiar way of stepping in, in a parry; knew his arm, and its just time of moving; put a firm faith in that, and never let his opponent escape. He was just as much a greater master than any other I ever saw, as he was a greater judge of time and measure." Figg's prowess in a combat with Sutton has been celebrated by Doctor Byrom—a poet of whom his native town, Manchester, may be justly proud; and his features and figure have been preserved by the most illustrious of his companions on the present occasion—Hogarth—in the *levée* in the "Rake's Progress," and in "Southwark Fair."

On the appearance of his visitors, Sheppard arose—his gyves clanking heavily as he made the movement—and folding his arms, so far as his manacles would permit him, upon his breast, steadily returned the glances fixed upon him.

"This is the noted housebreaker and prison-breaker, gentlemen," said Mr. Pitt, pointing to the prisoner.

"Odd's life!" cried Gay, in astonishment; "is this slight-made stripling Jack Sheppard? Why, I expected to see a man six foot high at the least, and as broad across the shoulders as our friend Figg. This is a mere boy. Are you sure you haven't mistaken the ward, Mr. Pitt?"

"There is no mistake, sir," rejoined the prisoner, drawing himself up. "I am Jack Sheppard."

"Well, I never was more surprised in my life," said the poet—"never!"

"He's just the man *I* expected to see," observed Hogarth, who, having arranged everything to Thornhill's satisfaction, had turned to look at the prisoner, and was now, with his chin upon his wrist, and his elbow supported by the other hand, bending his keen grey eyes upon him, "just the man! Look at that light, lithe figure—all muscle and activity, with not an ounce of superfluous flesh upon it. In my search after strange characters, Mr. Gay, I've been in many odd quarters of our city—have visited haunts frequented only by thieves—the Old Mint, the New Mint, the worst part of Saint Giles's, and other places—but I've nowhere seen any one who came up so completely to my notion of a first-rate housebreaker as the individual before us. Wherever I saw him, I should pick him out as a man designed by nature to plan and accomplish the wonderful escapes he has effected."

As he spoke, a smile crossed Sheppard's countenance.

"He understands me, you perceive," said Hogarth.

"Well, I won't dispute your judgment in such matters, Mr. Hogarth," replied Gay. "But I appeal to you, Sir James, whether it isn't extraordinary that so very slight a person should be such a desperate robber as he is represented—so young, too, for such an *old* offender. Why, he can scarcely be twenty."

"I am one-and-twenty," observed Jack.

"One-and-twenty, ah!" repeated Gay. "Well, I'm not far from the mark."

"He is certainly extremely youthful-looking, and very slightly made," said Thornhill, who had been attentively studying Sheppard's countenance. "But I agree with Hogarth, that he is precisely the person to do what he has done. Like a thorough-bred racer, he would sustain twice as much fatigue as a person of heavier mould. Can I be accommodated with a seat, Mr. Pitt?"

"Certainly, Sir James, certainly," replied the governor. "Get a chair, Austin."

While this order was obeyed, Figg, who had been standing near the door, made his way to the prisoner, and offered him his huge hand, which Jack warmly grasped.

"Well, Jack," said the prize-fighter, in a rough but friendly voice, and with a cut-and-thrust abrupt manner peculiar to himself, "how are you, lad, eh? Sorry to see you here. Wouldn't take my advice. Told you how it would be. One mistress enough to ruin a man—two, the devil. Laughed at me, then. Laugh on the wrong side of your mouth, now."

"You're not come to insult me, Mr. Figg?" said Jack peevishly.

"Insult you, not I," returned Figg. "Heard of your escapes. Everybody talking of you. Wished to see you. Old pupil. Capital swordsman. Shortly to be executed. Come to take leave. Trifle useful!" he added, slipping a few gold pieces into Jack's hand.

"You are very kind," said Jack, returning the money; "but I don't require assistance."

"Too proud, eh?" rejoined the prize-fighter. "Won't be under an obligation."

"There you're wrong, Mr. Figg," replied Jack, smiling; "for, before I'm taken to Tyburn, I mean to borrow a shirt for the occasion from you."



Austin the Turnkey Figg the Prize Fighter Gay the Poet
Sir James Thornhill

Jack Sheppard

Hogarth

The Portrait



"Have it, and welcome," rejoined Figg. "Always plenty to spare. Never bought a shirt in my life, Mr. Gay," he added, turning to the poet. "Sold a good many, though."

"How do you manage that, Mr. Figg?" asked Gay.

"Thus," replied the prize-fighter. "Proclaim a public fight. Challenge accepted. Fifty pupils. Day before, send round to each to borrow a shirt. Fifty sent home. All superfine holland. Wear one on the stage on the following day. Cut to pieces—slashed—blooded. Each of my scholars thinks it is his own shirt. Offer to return it to each in private. All make the same answer—'d—n you, keep it.'"

"An ingenious device," laughed Gay.

Sir James Thornhill's preparations being completed, Mr. Pitt desired to know if he wanted anything further, and being answered in the negative, he excused himself, on the plea that his attendance was required in the court at the Old Bailey, which was then sitting, and withdrew.

"Do me the favour to seat yourself, Jack?" said Sir James. "Gentlemen, a little farther off, if you please."

Sheppard immediately complied with the painter's request; while Gay and Figg drew back on one side, and Hogarth on the other. The latter took from his pocket a small note-book and pencil.

"I'll make a sketch, too," he said. "Jack Sheppard's face is well worth preserving."

After narrowly examining the countenance of the sitter, and motioning him with his pencil into a particular attitude, Sir James Thornhill commenced operations; and while he rapidly transferred his lineaments to the canvas, engaged him in conversation, in the course of which he artfully contrived to draw him into a recital of his adventures.

The ruse succeeded almost beyond his expectations.

During the narration Jack's features lighted up, and an expression, which would have been in vain looked for in repose, was instantly caught and depicted by the skilful artist. All the party were greatly interested by Sheppard's history—especially Figg, who laughed loud and long at the escape from the Condemned Hold. When Jack came to speak of Jonathan Wild, his countenance fell.

"We must change the subject," remarked Thornhill, pausing in his task; "this will never do."

"Quite right, Sir James," said Austin. "We never suffer him to mention Mr. Wild's name. He never appears to so little advantage as when speaking of him."

"I don't wonder at it," rejoined Gay.

Here Hogarth received a private signal from Thornhill to attract Sheppard's attention.

"And so you've given up all hope of escaping, eh, Jack?" remarked Hogarth.

"That's scarcely a fair question, Mr. Hogarth, before the gaoler," replied Jack; "but I tell you frankly, and Mr. Austin may repeat it if he pleases to his master, Jonathan Wild—I have *not*."

"Well said, Jack," cried Figg. "Never give in."

"Well," observed Hogarth, "if, fettered as you are, you contrive to break out of this dungeon, you'll do what no man ever did before."

A peculiar smile illuminated Jack's features.

"There it is!" cried Sir James eagerly. "There's the exact expression I want. For the love of Heaven, Jack, don't move! Don't alter a muscle, if you can help it."

And, with a few magical touches, he stamped the fleeting expression on the canvas.

"I have it, too!" exclaimed Hogarth, busily plying his pencil. "Gad! it's a devilish fine face when lit up."

"As like as life, sir," observed Austin, peeping over Thornhill's shoulder at the portrait. "As like as life."

"The very face," exclaimed Gay, advancing to look at it—"with all the escapes written in it."

"You flatter me," smiled Sir James. "But, I own, I think it *is* like."

"What do you think of *my* sketch, Jack?" said Hogarth, handing him the drawing.

"It's like enough, I dare say," rejoined Sheppard. "But it wants something *here*."

And he pointed significantly to the hand.

"I see," rejoined Hogarth, rapidly sketching a file, which he placed in the hands of the picture. "Will that do?" he added, returning it.

"It's better," observed Sheppard meaningly. "But you've given me what I don't possess."

"Hum!" said Hogarth, looking fixedly at him. "I don't see how I can improve it."

"May I look at it, sir?" said Austin, stepping towards him.

"No," replied Hogarth, hastily effacing the sketch. "I'm never satisfied with a first attempt."

"Egad, Jack," said Gay, "you should write your adventures. They would be quite as entertaining as the histories of Guzman d'Alfarache, Lazarillo de Tormes, Estevanillo Gonzalez, Meriton Latroon, or any of my favourite rogues—and far more instructive."

"You had better write them for me, Mr. Gay," rejoined Jack.

"If you'll write them, I'll illustrate them," observed Hogarth.

"An idea has just occurred to me," said Gay, "which Jack's narrative has suggested. I'll write an opera, the scene of which shall be laid in Newgate, and the principal character shall be a highwayman. I'll not forget your two mistresses, Jack."

"Nor Jonathan Wild, I hope," interposed Sheppard.

"Certainly not," replied Gay. "I'll gibbet the rascal. But I forget," he added, glancing at Austin; "it's high treason to speak disrespectfully of Mr. Wild in his own domain."

"I hear nothing," laughed Austin.

"I was about to add," continued Gay, "that my opera shall have no music except the good old ballad tunes. And we'll see whether it won't put the Italian opera out of fashion, with Cutzoni, Senesino, and the 'divine' Farinelli at its head."

"You'll do a national service, then," said Hogarth. "The sums lavished upon those people are perfectly disgraceful, and I shall be enchanted to see them hooted from the stage. But I've an idea as well as you, grounded in some measure upon Sheppard's story. I'll take two apprentices, and depict their career. One, by perseverance and industry, shall obtain fortune, credit, and the highest honours; while the other, by an opposite course, and dissolute habits, shall eventually arrive at Tyburn."

"Yours will be the nearer the truth, and have a deeper moral, Mr. Hogarth," remarked Jack dejectedly. "But if my career were truly exhibited, it must be as one long struggle against destiny in the shape of——"

"Jonathan Wild," interposed Gay. "I knew it. By-the-bye, Mr. Hogarth, didn't I see you last night at the ridotto with Lady Thornhill and her pretty daughter?"

"Me?—no, sir," stammered Hogarth, colouring.

And he hazarded a wink at the poet over the paper on which he was sketching. Luckily, Sir James was so much engrossed by his own task, that both the remark and gesture escaped him.

"I suppose I was mistaken," returned Gay. "You've been quizzing my friend Kent, I perceive, in your Burlington Gate."

"A capital caricature that," remarked Thornhill, laughing. "What does Mr. Kent say to it?"

"He thinks so highly of it, that he says if he had a daughter he would give her to the artist," answered Gay, a little maliciously.

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir James.

"'Sdeath," cried Hogarth, aside to the poet. "You've ruined my hopes."

"Advanced them, rather," replied Gay, in the same tone. "Miss Thornhill's a charming girl. *I* think a wife a needless incumbrance, and mean to die a bachelor. But, if I were in your place, I know what I'd do——"

"What — what would you do?" asked Hogarth eagerly.

"Run away with her," replied Gay.

"Pish!" exclaimed Hogarth.

But he afterwards acted upon the suggestion.

"Good-bye, Jack," said Figg, putting on his hat. "Rather in the way. Send you the shirt. Here, turn-key. Couple of guineas to drink Captain Sheppard's speedy escape. Thank him, not me, man. Give this fellow the slip if you can, Jack. If not, keep up your spirits. Die game."

"Never fear," replied Jack. "If I get free, I'll have a bout with you at all weapons. If not, I'll take a cheerful glass with you at the City of Oxford on my way to Tyburn."

"Give you the best I have in either case," replied Figg. "Good-bye!"

And, with a cordial shake of the hand, he took his departure.

Sir James Thornhill then rose.

"I won't trouble you further, Jack," he remarked. "I've done all I can to the portrait here. I must finish it at home."

"Permit me to see it, Sir James?" requested Jack.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as the painting was turned towards him, "what would my poor mother say to it."

"I was sorry to see that about your mother, Jack," observed Hogarth.

"What of her?" exclaimed Jack, starting up. "Is she dead?"

"No — no," answered Hogarth. "Don't alarm yourself. I saw it this morning in the *Daily Journal* — an advertisement, offering a reward——"

"A reward!" echoed Jack. "For what?"

"I had the paper with me. 'Sdeath! what can I have done with it? Oh! here it is," cried Hogarth, picking it from the ground. "I must have dropped it when I took out my note-book. There's the paragraph. '*Mrs. Sheppard left Mr. Wood's house at Dollis Hill on Tuesday*'—that's two days ago—'*and hasn't been heard of since.*'"

"Let me see," cried Jack, snatching the paper, and eagerly perusing the advertisement. "Ah!" he exclaimed, in a tone of anguish, "she has fallen into the villain's hands."

"What villain?" cried Hogarth.

"Jonathan Wild, I'll be sworn," said Gay.

"Right!—right!" cried Jack, striking his fettered hands against his breast. "She is in his power, and I am here, chained hand and foot, unable to assist her."

"I could make a fine sketch of him now," whispered Hogarth to Gay.

"I told you how it was, Sir James," said Austin, addressing the knight, who was preparing for his departure; "he attributes every misfortune that befalls him to Mr. Wild."

"And with some justice," replied Thornhill dryly.

"Allow me to assist you, Sir James," said Hogarth.

"Many thanks, sir," replied Thornhill, with freezing politeness; "but I do not require assistance."

"I tell you what, Jack," said Gay; "I've several

urgent engagements this morning, but I'll return to-morrow and hear the rest of your story. And, if I can render you any service, you may command me."

"To-morrow will be too late," said Sheppard moodily.

The easel and palette having been packed up, and the canvas carefully removed by Austin, the party took leave of the prisoner, who was so much abstracted that he scarcely noticed their departure. Just as Hogarth got to the door, the turnkey stopped him.

"You have forgotten your knife, Mr. Hogarth," he observed significantly.

"So I have," replied Hogarth, glancing at Sheppard.

"I can do without it," muttered Jack.

The door was then locked, and he was left alone.

At three o'clock, on the same day, Austin brought up Jack's provisions, and after carefully examining his fetters, and finding all secure, told him if he wanted anything further he must mention it, as he should not be able to return in the evening, his presence being required elsewhere. Jack replied in the negative, and it required all his mastery over himself to prevent the satisfaction which this announcement afforded him from being noticed by the gaoler. With the usual precautions, Austin then departed.

"And now," cried Jack, leaping up, "for an achievement, compared with which all I have yet done shall be as nothing!"

XVII

The Iron Bar.

JACK SHEPPARD'S first object was to free himself from his handcuffs. This he accomplished by holding the chain that connected them firmly between his teeth, and squeezing his fingers together as closely as possible,

succeeded in drawing his wrists through the manacles. He next twisted the heavy gyves round and round, and partly by main strength, partly by a dexterous and well-applied jerk, snapped asunder the central link by which they were attached to the padlock. Taking off his stockings, he then drew up the basils as far as he was able, and tied the fragments of the broken chain to his legs, to prevent them from clanking, and impeding his future exertions.

Jack's former attempt to pass up the chimney, it may be remembered, was obstructed by an iron bar. To remove this obstacle it was necessary to make an extensive breach in the wall. With the broken links of the chain, which served him in lieu of more efficient implements, he commenced operations just above the chimney-piece, and soon contrived to pick a hole in the plaster.

He found the wall, as he suspected, solidly constructed of brick and stone, and with the slight and inadequate tools which he possessed, it was a work of infinite labour and skill to get out a single brick. That done, however, he was well aware the rest would be comparatively easy, and, as he threw the brick to the ground, he exclaimed triumphantly—

“The first step is taken—the main difficulty is overcome.”

Animated by this trifling success, he proceeded with fresh ardour, and the rapidity of his progress was proclaimed by the heap of bricks, stones, and mortar, which before long covered the floor. At the expiration of an hour, by dint of unremitting exertion, he had made so large a breach in the chimney, that he could stand upright in it. He was now within a foot of the bar, and introducing himself into the hole, speedily worked his way to it.

Regardless of the risk he incurred from some heavy stone dropping on his head or feet—regardless also of the noise made by the falling rubbish, and the imminent

danger which he consequently ran of being interrupted by some of the gaolers, should the sound reach their ears, he continued to pull down large masses of the wall, which he flung upon the floor of the cell.

Having worked thus for another quarter of an hour without being sensible of fatigue, though he was half stifled by the clouds of dust which his exertions raised, he had made a hole about three feet wide, and six high, and uncovered the iron bar. Grasping it firmly with both hands, he quickly wrenched it from the stones in which it was mortised, and leapt to the ground. On examination it proved to be a flat bar of iron, nearly a yard in length, and more than an inch square. "A capital instrument for my purpose," thought Jack, shouldering it, "and worth all the trouble I have had in procuring it."

While he was thus musing, he fancied he heard the lock tried. A chill ran through his frame, and grasping the heavy weapon with which chance had provided him, prepared to strike down the first person who should enter the cell. After listening attentively for a short time without drawing breath, he became convinced that his apprehensions were groundless; and, greatly relieved, sat down upon the chair to rest himself, and prepare for further efforts.

Acquainted with every part of the gaol, Jack well knew that his only chance of effecting an escape must be by the roof. To reach it would be a most difficult undertaking. Still it *was* possible, and the difficulty was only a fresh incitement.

The mere enumeration of the obstacles that existed would have deterred any spirit less daring than Sheppard's from even hazarding the attempt. Independently of other risks, and of the chance of breaking his neck in the descent, he was aware that to reach the leads he should have to break open six of the strongest doors of the prison. Armed, however, with the implement he

had so fortunately obtained, he did not despair of success.

"My name will only be remembered as that of a robber," he mused ; "but it shall be remembered as that of a bold one ; and this night's achievement, if it does nothing else, shall prevent me from being classed with the common herd of depredators."

Roused by this reflection, filled with the deepest anxiety for his mother, and burning to be avenged upon Jonathan Wild, he grasped the iron bar, which, when he sat down, he had laid upon his knees, and stepped quickly across the room. In doing so he had to clamber up the immense heap of bricks and rubbish which now littered the floor, amounting almost to a cartload, and reaching up nearly to the top of the chimney-piece.

"Austin will stare," thought Jack, "when he comes here in the morning. It will cost them something to repair their stronghold, and take them more time to build it up again than I have taken to pull it down."

Before proceeding with his task, he considered whether it would be possible to barricade the door ; but, reflecting that the bar would be an indispensable assistant in his further efforts, he abandoned the idea, and determined to rely implicitly on that good fortune which had hitherto attended him on similar occasions.

Having once more got into the chimney, he climbed to a level with the ward above, and recommenced operations as vigorously as before. He was now aided with a powerful implement, with which he soon contrived to make a hole in the wall.

"Every brick I take out," cried Jack, as fresh rubbish clattered down the chimney, "brings me nearer my mother."

XVIII

The Red Room.

THE ward into which Jack was endeavouring to break was called the Red Room, from the circumstance of its walls having once been painted in that colour; all traces of which had, however, long since disappeared. Like the Castle, which it resembled in all respects except that it was destitute even of a barrack-bedstead, the Red Room was preserved for state prisoners, and had not been occupied since the year 1716, when the gaol, as has before been mentioned, was crowded by the Preston rebels.

Having made a hole in the wall sufficiently large to pass through, Jack first tossed the bar into the room, and then crept after it. As soon as he had gained his feet, he glanced round the bare blank walls of the cell, and oppressed by the musty, close atmosphere, exclaimed, "I'll let a little fresh air into this dungeon. They say it hasn't been opened for eight years—but I won't be eight years in getting out of it."

In stepping across the room, some sharp point in the floor pierced his foot, and, stooping to examine it, he found that the wound had been inflicted by a long rusty nail which projected from the boards. Totally disregarding the pain, he picked up the nail, and reserved it for future use. Nor was he long in making it available.

On examining the door, he found it secured by a large rusty lock, which he endeavoured to pick with the nail he had just acquired; but all his efforts proving ineffectual, he removed the plate that covered it with the bar, and with his fingers contrived to draw back the bolt.

Opening the door, he then stepped into a dark narrow passage, leading, as he was well aware, to the chapel. On the left there were doors communicating with the King's Bench ward and the Stone ward, two large holds on the Master Debtors' side. But Jack was too well versed in the geography of the place to attempt either of them. Indeed, if he had been ignorant of it, the sound of voices, which he could faintly distinguish, would have served as a caution to him.

Hurrying on, his progress was soon checked by a strong door, several inches in thickness, and nearly as wide as the passage. Running his hand carefully over it in search of the lock, he perceived to his dismay that it was fastened on the other side.

After several vain attempts to burst it open, he resolved, as a last alternative, to break through the wall in the part nearest to the lock. This was a much more serious task than he anticipated. The wall was of considerable thickness, and built together of stone; and the noise he was compelled to make in using the heavy bar, which brought sparks with every splinter he struck off, was so great, that he feared it must be heard by the prisoners on the Debtors' side. Heedless, however, of the consequences, he pursued his task.

Half-an-hour's labour, during which he was obliged more than once to pause to regain breath, sufficed to make a hole wide enough to allow a passage for his arm up to the elbow. In this way he was able to force back a ponderous bolt from its socket, and, to his unspeakable joy, found that the door instantly yielded. Once more cheered by daylight, he hastened forward, and entered the chapel.

XIX

The Chapel.

SITUATED at the upper part of the south-east angle of the gaol, the chapel of Old Newgate was divided on the north side into three grated compartments, or pens as they were termed, allotted to the common debtors and felons. In the north-west angle there was a small pen for female offenders, and, on the south, a more commodious enclosure, appropriated to the master debtors and strangers. Immediately beneath the pulpit stood a large circular pew, where malefactors under sentence of death sat to hear the condemned sermon delivered to them, and where they formed a public spectacle to the crowds which curiosity generally attracted on those occasions.

To return.

Jack had got into one of the pens at the north side of the chapel. The enclosure by which it was surrounded was about twelve feet high; the under part being composed of oaken planks, the upper of a strong iron grating, surmounted by sharp iron spikes. In the middle there was a gate. It was locked. But Jack speedily burst it open with the iron bar.

Clearing the few impediments in his way, he soon reached the condemned pew, where it had once been his fate to sit; and extending himself on the seat, endeavoured to snatch a moment's repose. It was denied him, for as he closed his eyes—though but for an instant—the whole scene of his former visit to the place rose behind him. There he sat as before, with the heavy fetters on his limbs; and beside him sat three companions, who had since expiated their offences on the gibbet. The chapel was again crowded with

visitors, and every eye—even that of Jonathan Wild, who had come thither to deride him—was fixed upon him. So perfect was the illusion, that he could almost fancy he heard the solemn voice of the ordinary warning him that his race was nearly run, and imploring him to prepare for eternity. From this perturbed state he was roused by thoughts of his mother, and fancying he heard her gentle voice urging him on to fresh exertion, he started up.

On one side of the chapel there was a large grated window, but, as it looked upon the interior of the gaol, Jack preferred following the course he had originally decided upon to making any attempt in this quarter.

Accordingly, he proceeded to a gate which stood upon the south, and guarded the passage communicating with the leads. It was grated and crested with spikes like that he had just burst open, and thinking it a needless waste of time to force it, he broke off one of the spikes, which he carried with him for further purposes, and then climbed over it.

A short flight of steps brought him into a dark passage, into which he plunged. Here he found another strong door, making the fifth he had encountered. Well aware that the doors in this passage were much stronger than those in the entry he had just quitted, he was neither surprised nor dismayed to find it fastened by a lock of unusual size.

After repeatedly trying to remove the plate, which was so firmly screwed down that it resisted all his efforts, and vainly attempting to pick it with the spike and nail, he at length, after half-an-hour's ineffectual labour, wrenched off the box by means of the iron bar, and the door, as he laughingly expressed it, "became his humble servant."

But this difficulty was only overcome to be succeeded by one still greater.

Hastening along the passage he came to the sixth door. For this he was prepared ; but he was not prepared for the almost insurmountable obstacles which it presented. Running his hand hastily over it, he was startled to find it one complicated mass of bolts and bars. It seemed as if all the precautions previously taken were here accumulated. Any one less courageous than himself would have abandoned the attempt from a conviction of its utter hopelessness ; but, though it might for a moment damp his ardour, it could not deter him.

Once again he passed his hand over the surface, and carefully noted all the obstacles. There was a lock, apparently more than a foot wide, strongly plated, and girded to the door with thick iron hoops. Below it a prodigiously large bolt was shot into the socket, and, in order to keep it there, was fastened by a hasp, and further protected by an immense padlock. Besides this, the door was crossed and recrossed by iron bars, clenched by broad-headed nails. An iron fillet secured the socket of the bolt and the box of the lock to the main post of the doorway.

Nothing disheartened by this survey, Jack set to work upon the lock, which he attacked with all his implements—now attempting to pick it with the nail, now to wrench it off with the bar ; but all without effect. He not only failed in making any impression, but seemed to increase the difficulties, for after an hour's toil he had broken the nail and slightly bent the iron bar.

Completely overcome by fatigue, with strained muscles and bruised hands, streaming with perspiration, and with lips so parched that he would gladly have parted with a treasure if he had possessed it for a draught of water, he sank against the wall, and while in this state he was seized with a sudden and strange alarm. He fancied that the turnkeys had dis-

covered his flight and were in pursuit of him—that they had climbed up the chimney—entered the Red Room—tracked him from door to door, and were now only detained by the gate which he had left unbroken in the chapel. He even thought he could detect the voice of Jonathan, urging and directing them.

So strongly was he impressed with this idea, that grasping the iron bar with both hands, he dashed it furiously against the door, making the passage echo with the blows. By degrees his fears vanished, and, hearing nothing, he grew calmer. His spirits revived, and encouraging himself with the idea that the present impediment, though the greatest, was the last, he set himself seriously to consider how it might best be overcome.

On reflection, it occurred to him that he might perhaps be able to loosen the iron fillet; a notion no sooner conceived than executed. With incredible labour, and by the aid of both spike and nail, he succeeded in getting the point of the bar beneath the fillet. Exerting all his energies, and using the bar as a lever, he forced off the iron band, which was full seven feet high, seven inches wide, and two thick, and which brought with it in its fall the box of the lock and the socket of the bolt, leaving no further hindrance. Overjoyed beyond measure at having vanquished this apparently insurmountable obstacle, Jack darted through the door.

XX

The Leads.

ASCENDING a short flight of steps, Jack found at the summit a door, which, being bolted in the inside, he speedily opened.

The fresh air which blew in his face greatly revived

him. He had now reached what was called the Lower Leads—a flat, covering a part of the prison contiguous to the gateway, and surrounded on all sides by walls about fourteen feet high. On the north stood the battlements of one of the towers of the gate. On this side a flight of wooden steps, protected by a hand-rail, led to a door opening upon the summit of the prison. This door was crested with spikes, and guarded on the right by a bristling semicircle of spikes.

Hastily ascending these steps, Jack found the door, as he anticipated, locked. He could have easily forced it, but preferred a more expeditious mode of reaching the roof which suggested itself to him. Mounting the door he had last opened, he placed his hands on the wall above, and quickly drew himself up.

Just as he got on the roof of the prison, Saint Sepulchre's clock struck eight. It was instantly answered by the deep note of Saint Paul's; and the concert was prolonged by other neighbouring churches. Jack had thus been six hours in accomplishing his arduous task.

Though nearly dark, there was still light enough left to enable him to discern surrounding objects. Through the gloom he distinctly perceived the dome of Saint Paul's, hanging like a black cloud in the air; and nearer to him he remarked the golden ball on the summit of the College of Physicians, compared by Garth to a "gilded pill." Other towers and spires—Saint Martin's on Ludgate Hill, and Christchurch in Newgate Street, were also distinguishable. As he gazed down into the courts of the prison, he could not help shuddering, lest a false step might precipitate him below.

To prevent the recurrence of any such escape as that just described, it was deemed expedient, in more recent times, to keep a watchman at the top of Newgate. Not many years ago, two men, employed on this duty,

quarrelled during the night, and in the morning their bodies were found stretched upon the pavement of the yard beneath.

Proceeding along the wall, Jack reached the southern tower, over the battlements of which he clambered, and crossing it, dropped upon the roof of the gate. He then scaled the northern tower, and made his way to the summit of that part of the prison which fronted Giltspur Street. Arrived at the extremity of the building, he found that it overlooked the flat roof of a house which, as far as he could judge in the darkness, lay at a depth of about twenty feet below. Not choosing to hazard so great a fall, Jack turned to examine the building to see whether any more favourable point of descent presented itself, but could discover nothing but steep walls, without a single available projection. As he looked around, he beheld an incessant stream of passengers hurrying on below. Lights glimmered in the windows of the different houses; and a lamplighter was running from post to post on his way to Snow Hill.

Finding it impossible to descend on any side without incurring serious risk, Jack resolved to return for his blanket, by the help of which he felt certain of accomplishing a safe landing on the roof of the house in Giltspur Street.

Accordingly he began to retrace his steps, and pursuing the course he had recently taken, scaling the two towers, and passing along the wall of the prison, he descended by means of the door upon the Lower Leads. Before he re-entered the prison, he hesitated, from a doubt whether he was not fearfully increasing his risk of capture; but, convinced that he had no other alternative, he went on.

During all this time, he had never quitted the iron bar, and he now grasped it with the firm determination of selling his life dearly, if he met with any opposition.

A few seconds sufficed to clear the passage, through which it had previously cost him more than two hours to force his way. The floor was strewn with screws, nails, fragments of wood and stone, and across the passage lay the heavy iron fillet. He did not disturb any of this litter, but left it as a mark of his prowess.

He was now at the entrance of the chapel, and striking the door over which he had previously climbed a violent blow with the bar, it flew open. To vault over the pews was the work of a moment ; and, having gained the entry leading to the Red Room, he passed through the first door, his progress being only impeded by the pile of broken stones which he himself had raised. Listening at one of the doors leading to the Master Debtors' side, he heard a loud voice chanting a Bacchanalian melody, and the boisterous laughter that accompanied the song convinced him that no suspicion was entertained in this quarter. Entering the Red Room, he crept through the hole in the wall, descended the chimney, and arrived once more in his old place of captivity.

How different were his present feelings compared with those he had experienced on quitting it. *Then*, though full of confidence, he half doubted his power of accomplishing his designs. *Now*, he *had* achieved them, and felt assured of success. The vast heap of rubbish on the floor had been so materially increased by the bricks and plaster thrown down in his attack upon the wall of the Red Room, that it was with some difficulty he could find the blanket, which was almost buried beneath the pile. He next searched for his stockings and shoes, and when found, put them on.

While he was thus employed, his nerves underwent a severe shock. A few bricks, dislodged probably by his last descent, came clattering down the chimney, and as it was perfectly dark, gave him the notion that some one was endeavouring to force an entrance into the room.

But these fears, like those he had recently experienced, speedily vanished, and he prepared to return to the roof, congratulating himself that, owing to the opportune falling of the bricks, he had in all probability escaped serious injury.

Throwing the blanket over his left arm, and shouldering the iron bar, he again clambered up the chimney; regained the Red Room; hurried along the first passage; crossed the Chapel; threaded the entry to the Lower Leads; and in less than ten minutes after quitting the Castle, had reached the northern extremity of the prison.

Previously to his descent he had left the nail and spike on the wall, and with these he fastened the blanket to the stone coping. This done, he let himself carefully down by it, and having only a few feet to drop, alighted in safety.

Having now fairly got out of Newgate for the second time, with a heart throbbing with exultation, he hastened to make good his escape. To his great joy he found a small garret door in the roof of the opposite house open.

He entered it; crossed the room, in which there was only a small truckle bed, over which he stumbled; opened another door, and gained the stair-head. As he was about to descend, his chains slightly rattled.

"O lud! what's that?" exclaimed a female voice, from an adjoining room.

"Only the dog," replied the rough tones of a man.

Securing the chain in the best way he could, Jack then hurried down two pair of stairs, and had nearly reached the lobby, when a door suddenly opened, and two persons appeared, one of whom held a light. Retreating as quickly as he could, Jack opened the first door he came to, entered a room, and searching in the dark for some place of concealment, fortunately discovered a screen, behind which he crept.

XXI

What befell Jack Sheppard in the Turner's House.

JACK was scarcely concealed when the door opened, and the two persons of whom we have caught a glimpse entered the room. What was his astonishment to recognise, in a few words they uttered, the voices of Kneebone and Winifred! The latter was apparently in great distress, and the former seemed to be using his best efforts to relieve her anxiety.

"How very fortunate it is," he observed, "that I happened to call upon Mr. Bird, the turner, to give him an order this evening. It was quite an unexpected pleasure to meet you and your worthy father."

"Pray, cease these compliments," returned Winifred; "and if you have any communication to make, do not delay it. You told me just now that you wished to speak a few words to me in private, concerning Thames Darrell, and for that purpose I have left my father below with Mr. Bird, and have come hither. What have you to say?"

"Too much," replied Kneebone, shaking his head sadly; "too much."

"Do not needlessly alarm me, I beseech you," replied Winifred. "Whatever your intelligence may be, I will strive to bear it. But do not awaken my apprehensions, unless you have good cause for so doing. What do you know of Thames? Where is he?"

"Don't agitate yourself, dearest girl," rejoined the woollen-draper, "or I shall never be able to commence my relation."

"I am calm—perfectly calm," replied Winifred. "Pray make no further mystery; but tell me all, without reserve."

"Since you require it, I must obey," replied Kneebone; "but prepare yourself for a terrible shock."

"For mercy's sake, go on," cried Winifred.

"At all hazards, then, you shall know the truth," replied the woollen-draper, in a tone of affected solicitude; "but are you really prepared?"

"Quite—quite," replied Winifred. "This suspense is worse than torture."

"I am almost afraid to utter it," said Kneebone; "but Thames Darrell is murdered."

"Murdered!" ejaculated Winifred.

"Basely and inhumanly murdered, by Jack Sheppard and Blueskin," continued Kneebone.

"Oh!—no—no—no," cried Winifred; "I cannot believe it. You must be misinformed, Mr. Kneebone. Jack may be capable of much that is wicked, but he would never lift his hand against his friend—of that I am assured."

"Generous girl!" cried Jack, from behind the screen.

"I have proofs to the contrary," replied Kneebone. "The murder was committed after the robbery of my house by Sheppard and his accomplices. I did not choose to mention my knowledge of this fact to your worthy father; but you may rely on its correctness."

"You were right not to mention it to him," rejoined Winifred, "for he is in such a state of distress at the mysterious disappearance of Mrs. Sheppard, that I fear any further anxiety might prove fatal to him. And yet I know not—for the object of his visit here to-night was to serve Jack, who, if your statement is correct—which I cannot, however, for a moment believe—does not deserve his assistance."

"You may rest assured he does not," rejoined Kneebone emphatically; "but I am at a loss to understand in what way your father proposes to assist him."

"Mr. Bird, the turner, who is an old friend of ours, has some acquaintance with the turnkeys of Newgate,"

replied Winifred, "and by his means my father hoped to convey some implements to Jack, by which he might effect another escape."

"I see," remarked Kneebone. "This must be prevented," he added to himself.

"Heaven grant you may have been wrongly informed with respect to Thames!" exclaimed Winifred; "but, I beseech you, on no account to mention what you have told me to my poor father. He is not in a state of mind to bear it."

"Rely on me," rejoined Kneebone. "One word before we part, adorable girl—only one," he continued, detaining her. "I would not venture to renew my suit while Thames lived, because I well knew your affections were fixed upon him. But now that this bar is removed, I trust I may, without impropriety, urge it."

"No more of this," said Winifred angrily. "Is this a season to speak on such a subject?"

"Perhaps not," rejoined the woollen-drafter, "but the uncontrollable violence of my passion must plead my excuse. My whole life shall be devoted to you, beloved girl. And when you reflect how much at heart your poor mother, whose loss we must ever deplore, had our union, you will, I am persuaded, no longer refuse me."

"Sir!" exclaimed Winifred.

"You will make me the happiest of mankind," cried the woollen-drafter, falling on his knees, and seizing her hand, which he devoured with kisses.

"Let me go," cried Winifred. "I disbelieve the whole story you have told me."

"By Heaven!" cried Kneebone, with increasing fervour, "it is true—as true as my affection for you."

"I do not doubt it," retorted Winifred scornfully; "because I attach credit neither to one nor the other. If Thames is murdered, you are his assassin. Let me go, sir."

The woollen-draper made no answer, but hastily starting up, bolted the door.

"What do you mean?" cried Winifred in alarm.

"Nothing more than to obtain a favourable answer to my suit," replied Kneebone.

"This is not the way to obtain it," said Winifred, endeavouring to reach the door.

"You shall not go, adorable girl," cried Kneebone, catching her in his arms, "till you have answered me. You must—you shall be mine."

"Never," replied Winifred. "Release me instantly, or I will call my father."

"Do so," replied Kneebone; "but remember the door is locked."

"Monster!" cried Winifred. "Help! help!"

"You call in vain," returned Kneebone.

"Not so," replied Jack, throwing down the screen. "Release her instantly, villain."

Both Winifred and her suitor started at this sudden apparition. Jack, whose clothes were covered with dust, and whose face was deathly pale from his recent exertion, looked more like a phantom than a living person.

"In the devil's name, is that you, Jack?" ejaculated Kneebone.

"It is," replied Sheppard. "You have uttered a wilful and deliberate falsehood in asserting that I have murdered Thames, for whom you well know I would lay down my life. Retract your words instantly, or take the consequences."

"What should I retract, villain?" cried the woollen-draper, who, at the sound of Jack's voice, had regained his confidence. "To the best of my belief, Thames Darrell has been murdered by you."

"A lie!" exclaimed Jack, in a terrible tone. And, before Kneebone could draw his sword, he felled him to the ground with the iron bar.

"You have killed him," cried Winifred in alarm.

"No," answered Jack, approaching her, "though if I had done so, he would have merited his fate. You do not believe his statement?"

"I do not," replied Winifred. "I could not believe you capable of so foul a deed. But oh! by what wonderful chance have you come hither so seasonably?"

"I have just escaped from Newgate," replied Jack; "and am more than repaid for the severe toil I have undergone, in being able to save you. But tell me," he added, with much anxiety, "has nothing been heard of Thames since the night of my former escape?"

"Nothing whatever," answered Winifred. "He left Dollis Hill at ten o'clock on that night, and has not since returned. My father has made every possible inquiry, and offered large rewards, but has not been able to discover the slightest trace of him. His suspicions at first fell upon you. But he has since acquitted you of any share in it."

"O Heaven!" exclaimed Jack.

"He has been indefatigable in his search," continued Winifred, "and has even journeyed to Manchester. But though he visited Sir Rowland Trenchard's seat, Asheton Hall, he could gain no tidings of him, or of his uncle, Sir Rowland, who, it seems, has left the country."

"Never to return," remarked Jack gloomily. "Before to-morrow morning I will ascertain what has become of Thames, or perish in the attempt. And now tell me what has happened to my poor mother."

"Ever since your last capture, and Thames's mysterious disappearance, she has been dreadfully ill," replied Winifred; "so ill, that each day was expected to be her last. She has also been afflicted with occasional returns of her terrible malady. On Tuesday night she was rather better, and I had left her for a short time, as I thought, asleep on the sofa in the little parlour of which she is so fond——"

"Well?" exclaimed Jack.

"On my return, I found the window open, and the room vacant. She was gone."

"Did you discover any traces of footsteps?" inquired Jack eagerly.

"There were some marks near the window; but whether recently made or not could not be ascertained," replied Winifred.

"O God!" exclaimed Jack, in a tone of the bitterest anguish. "My worst fears are realised. She is in Wild's power."

"I ought to add," continued Winifred, "that one of her shoes was picked up in the garden, and that prints of her feet were discovered along the soft mould; whether made in flying from any one, or from rushing forth in distracted terror, it is impossible to say. My father thought the latter. He has had the whole country searched; but hitherto without success."

"I know *where* she will be found, and *how*," rejoined Jack, with a shudder.

"I have something further to tell you," pursued Winifred. "Shortly after your last visit to Dollis Hill, my father was one evening waylaid by a man, who informed him that he had something to communicate respecting Thames, and had a large sum of money, and some important documents to deliver to him, which would be given up, provided he would undertake to procure your liberation."

"It was Blueskin," observed Jack.

"So my father thought," replied Winifred; "and he therefore instantly fired upon him. But though the shot took effect, as was evident from the stains on the ground, the villain escaped."

"Your father did right," replied Jack, with some bitterness. "But if he had not fired that shot, he might have saved Thames, and possessed himself of papers which would have established his birth, and his right to the estates of the Trenchard family."

"Would you have had him spare my mother's murderer?" cried Winifred.

"No, no," replied Jack. "And yet—but it is only part of the chain of ill-luck that seems wound around me. Listen to me, Winifred."

And he hastily related the occurrences in Jonathan Wild's house.

The account of the discovery of Sir Rowland's murder filled Winifred with alarm; but when she learnt what had befallen Thames—how he had been stricken down by the thief-taker's bludgeon, and left for dead, she uttered a piercing scream, fainted, and would have fallen, if Jack had not caught her in his arms. Jack had well-nigh fallen too. The idea that he held in his arms the girl whom he had once so passionately loved, and for whom he soon regained an ardent but hopeless attachment, almost overcame him. Gazing at her with eyes blinded with tears, he imprinted one brotherly kiss upon her lips. It was the first—and the last!

At this juncture, the handle of the door was tried, and the voice of Mr. Wood was heard without, angrily demanding admittance.

"What's the matter?" he cried. "I thought I heard a scream. Why is the door fastened? Open it directly."

"Are you alone?" asked Jack, mimicking the voice of Kneebone.

"What for?" demanded Wood. "Open the door, I say, or I'll burst it open."

Carefully depositing Winifred on a sofa, Jack then extinguished the light, and as he unfastened the door crept behind it. In rushed Mr. Wood with a candle in his hand, which Jack instantly blew out and darted downstairs.

He upset some one—probably Mr. Bird—who was rushing upstairs, alarmed by Mr. Wood's cries; but regardless of this he darted along a passage, gained

the shop, and passed through an open door into the street. And thus he was once more free, having effected one of the most wonderful escapes ever planned or accomplished.

XXII

Fast and Loose.

ABOUT seven o'clock on the same night, Jonathan Wild's two janizaries, who had been for some time in attendance in the hall of his dwelling at the Old Bailey, were summoned to the audience-chamber. A long and secret conference then took place between the thief-taker and his myrmidons, after which they were severally dismissed.

Left alone, Jonathan lighted a lamp, and, opening the trap-door, descended the secret stairs. Taking the opposite course from that which he had hitherto pursued when it has been necessary to attend him in his visits to the lower part of his premises, he struck into a narrow passage on the right, which he tracked till he came to a small door, like the approach to a vault. Unlocking it, he entered the chamber, which by no means belied its external appearance.

On a pallet in one corner lay a pale, emaciated female.

Holding the lamp over her rigid but beautiful features, Jonathan, with some anxiety, placed his hand upon her breast to ascertain whether the heart still beat. Satisfied with this scrutiny, he produced a pocket-flask, and taking off the silver cup with which it was mounted, filled it with the contents of the flask, and then seizing the thin arm of the sleeper, rudely shook it. Opening her large black eyes, she fixed them upon him for a moment with

a mixture of terror and loathing, and then averted her gaze.

"Drink this," cried Jonathan, handing her the cup. "You'll feel better after it."

Mechanically raising the potion to her lips, the poor creature swallowed it without hesitation.

"Is it poison?" she asked.

"No," replied Jonathan, with a brutal laugh. "I'm not going to get rid of you just yet. It's gin—liquor you used to like. You'll find the benefit of it by-and-by. You've a good deal to go through to-night."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard, "are you come to renew your terrible proposals?"

"I'm come to execute my threats," replied Wild. "To-night you shall be my wedded wife."

"I will die first," replied Mrs. Sheppard.

"You may die *afterwards* as soon as you please," retorted Jonathan; "but live till then you *shall*. I've sent for the priest."

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, vainly trying to discover a gleam of compassion in the thief-taker's inexorable countenance—"Mercy! mercy!"

"Pshaw!" rejoined Jonathan. "You should be glad to be made an honest woman."

"Oh! let me die," groaned the widow. "I have not many days—perhaps not many hours to live. But kill me rather than commit this outrage."

"That wouldn't answer my purpose," replied Jonathan savagely. "I didn't carry you off from old Wood to kill you, but to wed you."

"What motive can you have for so vile a deed?" asked Mrs. Sheppard.

"You know my motive well enough," answered Jonathan. "However, I'll refresh your memory. I once might have married you for your beauty—now I marry you for your wealth."

"My wealth," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "I have nothing."

"You are heiress to the Trenchard property," rejoined Jonathan, "one of the largest estates in Lancashire."

"Not while Thames Darrell and Sir Rowland live."

"Sir Rowland is dead," replied Jonathan gloomily. "Thames Darrell only waits my mandate to follow him. Before our marriage there will be no life between you and the estates."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Sheppard.

"Look here," cried Jonathan, stooping down and taking hold of a ring in the floor, with which, by a great effort, he raised up a flag. "In this pit," he added, pointing to a chasm below, "your brother is buried. Here your nephew will speedily be thrown."

"Horrible!" cried Mrs. Sheppard, shuddering violently. "But your dreadful projects will recoil on your own head. Heaven will not permit the continuance of such wickedness as you practise."

"I'll take my chance," replied Jonathan, with a sinister smile. "My schemes have succeeded tolerably well hitherto."

"A day of retribution will assuredly arrive," rejoined Mrs. Sheppard.

"Till then I shall remain content," returned Wild. "And now, Mrs. Sheppard, attend to what I'm about to say to you. Years ago, when you were a girl, and in the bloom of your beauty, I loved you."

"Loved me! *You!*"

"I loved you," continued Jonathan; "and struck by your appearance, which seemed above your station, inquired your history, and found you had been stolen by a gipsy in Lancashire. I proceeded to Manchester, to investigate the matter further, and when there ascertained, beyond a doubt, that you were the eldest daughter of Sir Montacute Trenchard. This discovery made, I hastened back to London to offer you my hand,

but found you had married in the meantime a smock-faced, smooth-tongued carpenter, named Sheppard. The important secret remained locked in my breast, but I resolved to be avenged. I swore I would bring your husband to the gallows—would plunge you in such want, such distress, that you should have no alternative but the last frightful resource of misery—and I also swore, that if you had a son he should share the same fate as his father.”

“And terribly you have kept your vow,” replied Mrs. Sheppard.

“I have,” replied Jonathan. “But I am now coming to the point which most concerns you. Consent to become my wife, and do not compel me to have recourse to violence to effect my purpose, and I will spare your son.”

Mrs. Sheppard looked fixedly at him, as if she would penetrate the gloomy depths of his soul.

“Swear that you will do this,” she cried.

“I swear it,” replied Jonathan readily.

“But what is an oath to you!” cried the widow distrustfully. “You will not hesitate to break it, if it suits your purpose. I have suffered too much from your treachery. I will not trust you.”

“As you please,” replied Jonathan sternly. “Recollect you are in my power. Jack’s life hangs on your determination.”

“What shall I do?” cried Mrs. Sheppard, in a voice of agony.

“Save him,” replied Jonathan. “You *can* do so.”

“Bring him here—let me see him—let me embrace him—let me be assured that he is safe, and I am yours. I swear it.”

“Hum!” exclaimed Jonathan.

“You hesitate—you are deceiving me.”

“By my soul, no,” replied Jonathan, with affected sincerity. “You shall see him to-morrow.”

"Delay the marriage till then. I will never consent till I see him."

"You ask impossibilities," replied Jonathan sullenly. "All is prepared. The marriage cannot—shall not be delayed. You must be mine to-night."

"Force shall not make me yours till Jack is free," replied the widow resolutely.

"An hour hence, I shall return with the priest," replied Jonathan, striding towards the door. And, with a glance of malignant exultation, he quitted the vault, and locked the door.

"An hour hence, I shall be beyond your malice," said Mrs. Sheppard, sinking backwards upon the pallet.

XXIII

The Last Meeting between Jack Sheppard and his Mother.

AFTER escaping from the turner's house, Jack Sheppard skirted Saint Sepulchre's Church, and, hurrying down Snow Hill, darted into the first turning on the left.

Traversing Angel Court and Green Arbour Court—celebrated as one of Goldsmith's retreats—he speedily reached Seacoal Lane, and, pursuing the same course which he and Thames had formerly taken, arrived at the yard at the back of Jonathan's habitation.

A door, it may be remembered, opened from Wild's dwelling into this yard. Before he forced an entrance, Jack tried it, and, to his great surprise and delight, found it unfastened.

Entering the house, he found himself in a narrow passage leading to the back stairs. He had not taken many steps when he perceived Quilt Arnold in the upper gallery, with a lamp in his hand. Hearing a

noise below, Quilt called out, supposing it occasioned by the Jew. Jack hastily retreated, and, taking the first means of concealment that occurred to him, descended the cellar steps.

Quilt, meanwhile, came down, examined the door, and finding it unfastened, locked it, with a bitter imprecation on his brother-janizary's carelessness. This done, he followed the course which Jack had just taken. As he crossed the cellar, he passed so near to Jack, who had concealed himself behind a piece of furniture, that he almost touched him.

It was Jack's intention to have knocked him down with the iron bar; but he was so struck with the janizary's looks that he determined to spare him till he had ascertained his purpose. With this view, he suffered him to pass on.

Quilt's manner, indeed, was that of a man endeavouring to muster up sufficient resolution for the commission of some desperate crime. He halted—looked fearfully around—stopped again, and exclaimed aloud—

"I don't like the job; and yet it must be done, or Mr. Wild will hang me."

With this, he appeared to pluck up his courage, and stepped forward more boldly.

"Some dreadful deed is about to be committed, which I may perhaps prevent," muttered Jack to himself. "Heaven grant I may not be too late!"

Followed by Jack Sheppard, who kept sufficiently near him to watch his proceedings, and yet not expose himself, Quilt unlocked one or two doors, which he left open; and after wending his way along a gloomy passage, arrived at the door of a vault.

Here he set down the lamp and took out a key, and, as he did so, the expression of his countenance was so atrocious that Jack felt assured he was not wrong in his suspicions.

By this time the door was unlocked, and, drawing

his sword, Quilt entered the cell. The next moment an exclamation was heard in the voice of Thames.

Darting forward at this sound, Jack threw open the door and beheld Quilt kneeling over Thames, whose hands and feet were bound with cords, and about to plunge his sword into his breast. A blow from the iron bar instantly stretched the ruffian on the floor.

Jack then proceeded to liberate the captive from his bondage.

"Jack!" exclaimed Thames. "Is it you?"

"It is," replied Sheppard, as he untied the cords. "I might return the question. Were it not for your voice, I don't think I should know you. You are greatly altered."

Captivity had, indeed, produced a striking alteration in Thames. He looked like the shadow of himself—thin, feeble, hollow-eyed—his beard unshorn—nothing could be more miserable.

"I have never been out of this horrible dungeon since we last met," he said; "though how long ago that is I scarcely know. Night and day have been alike to me."

"Six weeks have elapsed since that fatal night," replied Jack. "During the whole of that time I have been a close prisoner in Newgate, whence I have only just escaped."

"Six weeks!" exclaimed Thames, in a melancholy tone. "It seems like six long months to me."

"I do not doubt it," returned Jack; "none but those who have experienced it can understand the miseries of imprisonment."

"Do not speak of it," rejoined Thames, with a look of horror. "Let us fly from this frightful place."

"I will conduct you to the outlet," replied Jack; "but I cannot leave it till I have ascertained whether my mother also is a prisoner here."

"I can answer that," replied Thames. "She is. The monster, Wild, when he visited my dungeon last

night, told me, to add to my misery, that she occupied a cell near me."

"Arm yourself with that ruffian's weapons," replied Jack, "and let us search for her."

Thames complied. But he was so feeble, that it seemed scarcely possible he could offer any effectual resistance in case of an attack.

"Lean on me," said Jack.

Taking the light, they then proceeded along the passage. There was no other door in it, and Jack therefore struck into another entry which branched off to the right. They had not proceeded far when a low moan was heard.

"She is here," cried Jack, darting forward.

A few steps brought him to the door of the vault in which his mother was immured. It was locked. Jack had brought away the bunch of keys which he had taken from Quilt Arnold, but none of them would open it. He was therefore obliged to use the iron bar, which he did with as much caution as circumstances would permit. At the first blow, Mrs. Sheppard uttered a piercing scream.

"Wretch!" she cried, "you shall not force me to your hateful purpose. I will never wed you. I have a weapon—a knife—and if you attempt to open the door, I will plunge it to my heart."

"O God!" exclaimed Jack, paralysed by her cries. "What shall I do? If I persist, I shall destroy her."

"Get hence," continued Mrs. Sheppard, with a frenzied laugh. "You shall never behold me alive."

"Mother!" cried Jack, in a broken voice. "It is your son."

"It is false," cried Mrs. Sheppard. "Think not to deceive me, monster. I know my son's voice too well. He is in Newgate. Hence."

"Mother! dear mother!" cried Jack, in a voice the tones of which were altered by his very anxiety to

make them distinct, "listen to me. I have broken from prison, and am come to save you."

"It is *not* Jack's voice," rejoined Mrs. Sheppard. "I am not to be deceived. The knife is at my breast. Stir a foot, and I strike."

"O Heavens!" cried Jack, driven to his wit's end. "Mother—dear mother! Once again, I beseech you to listen to me. I am come to rescue you from Wild's violence. I must break open the door. Hold your hand for a moment."

"You have heard my fixed determination, villain," cried Mrs. Sheppard. "I know my life is valuable to you, or you would not spare it. But I will disappoint you. Get you gone. Your purposes are defeated."

"Footsteps are approaching," cried Thames. "Heed her not. It is but a wild threat."

"I know not how to act," exclaimed Jack, almost driven to desperation.

"I hear you plotting with your wicked associates," cried Mrs. Sheppard. "I have baffled you."

"Force the door," said Thames, "or you will be too late."

"Better she die by her own hand, than by that monster's," cried Jack, brandishing the bar. "Mother, I come to you."

With this he struck the door a heavy blow.

He listened. There was a deep groan, and the sound of a fall within.

"I have killed her," exclaimed Jack, dropping the bar, "by your advice, Thames. O God! pardon me."

"Do not delay," cried Thames. "She may yet be saved. I am too weak to aid you."

Jack again seized the bar, and, dashing it furiously against the door, speedily burst it open.

The unfortunate woman was stretched upon the floor with a bloody knife in her hand.

"Mother!" cried Jack, springing towards her.

"Jack!" she cried, raising her head. "Is it you?"

"It is," replied her son. "Oh! why would you not listen to me?"

"I was distracted," replied Mrs. Sheppard faintly.

"I have killed you," cried Jack, endeavouring to stanch the effusion of blood from her breast. "Forgive—forgive me."

"I have nothing to forgive," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "I alone am to blame."

"Can I not carry you where you can obtain help?" cried Jack, in an agony of distress.

"It is useless," replied Mrs. Sheppard; "nothing can save me. I die happy—quite happy in beholding you. Do not remain with me. You may fall into the hands of your enemy. Fly! fly!"

"Do not think of me, mother, but of yourself," cried Jack, in an agony of tears.

"You have always been far dearer to me than myself," replied Mrs. Sheppard. "But I have one last request to make. Let me lie in Willesden Churchyard."

"You shall—you shall," answered Jack.

"We shall meet again ere long, my son," cried Mrs. Sheppard, fixing her glazing eyes upon him.

"O God! she is dying," exclaimed Jack, in a voice suffocated with emotion. "Forgive me—oh! forgive me."

"Forgive you—bless you," she gasped.

A cold shiver ran through her frame, and her gentle spirit passed away for ever.

"O God! that I might die too," cried Jack, falling on his knees beside her.

After the first violent outbreak of grief had in some degree subsided, Thames addressed him.

"You must not remain here," he said. "You can render no further service to your poor mother."

"I can avenge her," cried Jack, in a terrible tone.

"Be ruled by me," returned Thames. "You will

act most in accordance with her wishes, could she dictate them, by compliance. Do not waste time in vain regrets, but let us remove the body, that we may fulfil her last injunctions."

After some further arguments, Jack assented to this proposal.

"Go on first with the light," he said. "I will bear the body."

And he raised it in his arms.

Just as they reached the end of the passage, they heard the voices of Jonathan and the Jew in Thames's late place of confinement. Wild had evidently discovered the body of Quilt Arnold, and was loudly expressing his anger and astonishment.

"Extinguish the light," cried Jack; "turn to the left. Quick! Quick!"

The order was only just given in time. They had scarcely gained the adjoining cellar when Jonathan and the Jew rushed past in the direction of the vault.

"Not a moment is to be lost," cried Jack; "follow me."

So saying, he hurried upstairs, opened the back door, and was quickly in the yard. Having ascertained that Thames was at his heels, he hurried with his ghastly burden down Seacoal Lane.

"Where are you going?" cried Thames, who, though wholly disencumbered, was scarcely able to keep up with him.

"I know not—and care not," replied Jack.

At this moment, a coach passed them, and was instantly hailed by Thames.

"You had better let me convey her to Dollis Hill," he said.

"Be it so," replied Jack.

Luckily it was so dark, and there was no lamp near, that the man did not notice the condition of the body, which was placed in the vehicle by the two young men.

"What will you do?" asked Thames.

"Leave me to my fate," rejoined Jack. "Take care of your charge."

"Doubt me not," replied Thames.

"Bury her in Willesden Churchyard, as she requested, on Sunday," said Jack. "I will be there at the time."

So saying, he closed the door. The coachman, having received his order, and being offered an extra fare if he drove quickly, set off at full speed. As Jack departed, a dark figure, emerging from behind a wall, rushed after him.

XXIV

The Pursuit.

AFTER running to some distance down Seacoal Lane, Jack stopped to give a last look at the vehicle which was bearing away the remains of his beloved and ill-fated mother. It was scarcely out of sight when two persons, whom he instantly recognised as Jonathan and Abraham Mendez, turned the corner of the street, and made it evident from their shouts that they likewise perceived him.

Starting off at a rapid pace, Jack dashed down Turnagain Lane, skirted the eastern bank of Fleet Ditch, crossed Holborn Bridge, and began to ascend the neighbouring hill. By the time he had reached Saint Andrew's Church, his pursuers had gained the bridge, and the attention of such passengers as crowded the streets were attracted towards him by their vociferations. Amongst others, the watchman whose box was placed against the churchyard wall, near the entrance to Shoe Lane, rushed out and sprung his rattle, which was immediately answered by another

rattle from Holborn Bars. Darting down Field Lane, Jack struck into a labyrinth of streets on the left; but though he ran as swiftly as he could, he was not unperceived. His course had been observed by the watchman, who directed Wild which way to take. "It is Jack Sheppard, the noted housebreaker," cried Jonathan, at the top of his sonorous voice. "He has just broken out of Newgate. After him! A hundred pounds to the man who takes him."

Sheppard's name operated like magic on the crowd. The cry was echoed by twenty different voices. People ran out of their shops to join in the pursuit; and by the time Wild had got into Field Lane, he had a troop of fifty persons at his heels—all eager to assist in the capture.

"Stop thief!" roared Jonathan, who perceived the fugitive hurrying along a street towards Hatton Garden. "It is Sheppard—Jack Sheppard—stop him!"

And his shouts were reiterated by the pack of bloodhounds at his heels.

Jack, meanwhile, heard the shouts, and though alarmed by them, held on a steady course. By various twistings and turnings, during all which time his pursuers, who were greatly increased in numbers, kept him in view, he reached Gray's Inn Lane. Here he was hotly pursued. Fatigued by his previous exertions, and encumbered by his fetters, he was by no means—though ordinarily remarkably swift of foot—a match for his foes, who were fast gaining upon him.

At the corner of Liquorpond Street stood the Old Hampstead coach-office; and, on the night in question, a knot of ostlers, waggoners, drivers, and stable-boys was collected in the yard. Hearing the distant shouts, these fellows rushed down to the entrance of the court, and arrived there just as Jack passed it. "Stop thief!" roared Jonathan. "Stop thief!" clamoured the rabble behind.

At no loss to comprehend that Jack was the individual pointed out by these outcries, two of the nearest of the group made a dash at him. But Jack eluded their grasp. A large dog was then set at him by a stable-boy; but, striking the animal with his faithful iron bar, he speedily sent him yelping back. The two ostlers, however, kept close at his heels; and Jack, whose strength began to flag, feared he could not hold out much longer. Determined, however, not to be taken with life, he held on.

Still keeping ahead of his pursuers, he ran along the direct road, till the houses disappeared, and he got into the open country. Here he was preparing to leap over the hedge into the fields, on the left, when he was intercepted by two horsemen, who, hearing the shouts, rode up and struck at him with the butt-ends of their heavy riding-whips. Warding off the blows as well as he could with the bar, Jack struck both the horses on the head, and the animals plunged so violently that they not only prevented their riders from assailing him, but also kept off the ostlers; and, in the confusion that ensued, Jack managed to spring over the fence, and shaped his course across the field in the direction of Sir John Oldcastle's.

The stoppage had materially lessened the distance between him and his pursuers, who now amounted to more than a hundred persons, many of whom carried lanterns and links. Ascertaining that it was Sheppard of whom this concourse was in pursuit, the two horsemen leapt the hedge, and were presently close upon him.

Like a hare closely pressed, Jack attempted to double, but the device only brought him nearer his foes, who were crossing the field in every direction, and rending the air with their shouts. The uproar was tremendous—men yelling—dogs barking—but above all was heard the stentorian voice of Jonathan,

urging them on. Jack was so harassed that he felt half inclined to stand at bay.

While he was straining every sinew, his foot slipped, and he fell head-foremost into a deep trench, which he had not observed in the dark. This fall saved him, for the horsemen passed over him. Creeping along quickly on his hands and knees, he found the entrance to a covered drain, into which he crept. He was scarcely concealed when he heard the horsemen, who perceived they had overshot their mark, ride back.

By this time, Jonathan, and the vast mob attending him, had come up, and the place was rendered almost as light as day by the links.

"He must be somewhere hereabouts," cried one of the horsemen, dismounting. "We were close upon him, when he suddenly disappeared."

Jonathan made no answer, but snatching a torch from a bystander, jumped into the trench, and commenced a diligent search. Just as he had arrived at the mouth of the drain, and Jack felt certain he must be discovered, a loud shout was raised from the farther end of the field that the fugitive was caught. All the assemblage, accompanied by Jonathan, set off in this direction, when it turned out that the supposed house-breaker was a harmless beggar, who had been found asleep under a hedge.

Jonathan's vexation and disappointment was expressed in the bitterest imprecations, and he returned as speedily as he could to the trench. But he had now lost the precise spot; and thinking he had examined the drain, turned his attention to another quarter.

Meanwhile, the excitement of the chase had in some degree subsided. The crowd dispersed in different directions, and most fortunately a heavy shower coming on, put them altogether to flight. Jonathan, however, still lingered. He seemed wholly insensible to the rain,

though it presently descended in torrents, and continued his search as ardently as before.

After occupying himself thus for the best part of an hour, he thought Jack must have given him the slip. Still, his suspicions were so strong, that he ordered Mendez to remain on guard near the spot all night, and, by the promise of a large reward, induced two other men to keep him company.

As he took his departure he whispered to the Jew : “Take him dead or alive ; but if we fail now, and you heard him aright in Seacoal Lane, we are sure of him at his mother’s funeral on Sunday.”

XXV

How Jack Sheppard got rid of his Irons.

ABOUT an hour after this, Jack ventured to emerge from his place of concealment. It was still raining heavily, and profoundly dark. Drenched to the skin—in fact, he had been lying in a bed of muddy water—and chilled to the very bone, he felt so stiff, that he could scarcely move.

Listening attentively, he fancied he heard the breathing of some one near him, and moved cautiously in the opposite direction. In spite of his care, he came in contact with a man, who, endeavouring to grasp him, cried in the voice of Mendez, “Who goes dere ? Shpeak ! or I fire !”

No answer being returned, the Jew instantly discharged his pistol, and, though the shot did no damage, the flash discovered Sheppard. But as the next moment all was profound darkness, Jack easily managed to break away from them. Without an idea where he was going, Jack pursued his way through the fields ; and

as he proceeded, the numbness of his limbs in some degree wore off, and his confidence returned. He had need of all the inexhaustible energy of his character to support him through his toilsome walk over the wet grass, or along the slippery ploughed land. At last he got into a lane, but had not proceeded far, when he was again alarmed by the sound of a horse's tread.

Once more breaking through the hedge, he took to the fields. He was now almost driven to despair. Wet as he was, he felt if he lay down in the grass, he should perish with cold ; while, if he sought a night's lodging in any asylum, his dress, stained with blood and covered with dirt, would infallibly cause him to be secured and delivered into the hands of justice. And then the fetters, which were still upon his legs—how was he to get rid of them ?

Tired and dispirited, he still wandered on. Again returning to the main road, he passed through Clapton ; and turning off on the left, arrived at the foot of Stamford Hill. He walked on for an hour longer, till he could scarcely drag one leg after another. At length he fell down on the road, fully expecting each moment would prove his last.

How long he continued thus he scarcely knew, but just before dawn, he managed to regain his legs, and, crawling up a bank, perceived he was within a quarter of a mile of Tottenham. A short way off in the fields, he descried a sort of shed or cowhouse, and thither he contrived to drag his weary limbs. Opening the door, he found it littered with straw, on which he threw himself, and instantly fell asleep.

When he awoke it was late in the day, and raining heavily. For some time he could not stir, but felt sick and exhausted. His legs were dreadfully swelled ; his hands bruised ; and his fetters occasioned him intolerable pain. His bodily suffering, however, was nothing compared with his mental anguish. All the

events of the previous day rushed to his recollection ; and though he had been unintentionally the cause of his mother's death, he reproached himself as severely as if he had been her actual murderer.

"Had I not been the guilty wretch I am," he cried, bursting into an agony of tears, "she would never have died thus."

This strong feeling of remorse having found a natural vent, in some degree subsided, and he addressed himself to his present situation. Rousing himself, he went to the door. It had ceased raining, but the atmosphere was moist and chill, and the ground deluged by the recent showers.

Taking up a couple of large stones which lay near, Jack tried to beat the round basils of the fetters into an oval form, so as to enable him to slip his heels through them. While he was thus employed, a farming man came into the barn. Jack instantly started to his feet, and the man, alarmed at his appearance, ran off to a neighbouring house. Before he could return, Jack had made good his retreat ; and wandering about the lanes and hedges, kept out of sight as much as possible.

On examining his pockets, he found about twenty guineas in gold, and some silver. But how to avail himself of it was the question, for in his present garb, he was sure to be recognised. When night fell, he crept into the town of Tottenham.

As he passed along the main thoroughfare, he heard his own name pronounced, and found that it was a hawker, crying a penny history of his escapes. A crowd was collected round the fellow, who was rapidly disposing of his stock.

"Here's the full, true, and particular account of Jack Sheppard's last astonishing and never-to-be-forgotten escape from the Castle of Newgate," bawled the hawker ; "with a print of him taken from the life, showing the manner how he was shackled and hand-

cuffed. Only one penny—two copies—twopence—thank you, sir. Here's the——"

"Let me have one," cried a servant-maid, running across the street, and in her haste forgetting to shut the door—"here's the money. Master and missis have been talking all day long about Jack Sheppard, and I'm dying to read his life."

"Here you have it, my dear," returned the hawker. "Sold again."

"If you don't get back quickly, Lucy," observed a bystander, "Jack Sheppard will be in the house before you."

This sally occasioned a general laugh.

"If Jack would come to my house, I'd contrive to hide him," remarked a buxom dame. "Poor fellow. I'm glad he has escaped."

"Jack seems to be a great favourite with the fair sex," observed a smirking grocer's apprentice.

"Of course," rejoined the bystander who had just spoken, and who was of a cynical turn—"the greater the rascal, the better they like him."

"Here a particular account of Jack's many robberies and escapes," roared the hawker—"how he broke into the house of his master, Mr. Wood, at Dollis Hill——"

"Let me have one," said a carpenter, who was passing by at the moment. "Mr. Wood was an old friend of mine—and I recollect seeing Jack when he was bound 'prentice to him."

"A penny, if you please, sir," said the hawker. "Sold again! Here you have the full, true, and particular account of the barbarous murder committed by Jack Sheppard and his associate, Joseph Blake, *alias* Blueskin, upon the body of Mrs. Wood——"

"That's false!" cried a voice behind him.

The man turned at the exclamation, and so did several of the bystanders; but they could not make out who had uttered it.

Jack, who had been lingering near the group, now walked on.

In the middle of the little town stood the shop of a Jew dealer in old clothes. The owner was at the door, unhooking a few articles of wearing apparel which he had exposed outside for sale. Amongst other things, he had just brought down an old laced bavaroy, a species of surtout much worn at the period.

"What do you want for that coat, friend?" asked Jack, as he came up.

"More than you'll pay for it, friend," snuffed the Jew.

"How do you know that?" rejoined Jack. "Will you take a guinea for it?"

"Double that sum might tempt me," replied the Jew; "it's a nobleman's coat, upon my shoul!"

"Here's the money," replied Jack, taking the coat.

"Shall I help you on with it, sir?" replied the Jew, becoming suddenly respectful.

"No," replied Jack.

"I half suspect this is a highwayman," thought the Jew; "he's so ready with his cash. I've some other things inside, sir, which you might wish to buy—some pistols."

Jack was about to comply; but not liking the man's manner, he walked on.

Farther on, there was a small chandler's shop, where Jack observed an old woman seated at the counter, attended by a little girl. Seeing provisions in the window, Jack ventured in and bought a loaf.

Having secured this—for he was almost famished—he said that he had lost a hammer, and wished to purchase one. The old woman told him she had no such article to dispose of, but recommended him to a neighbouring blacksmith.

Guided by the glare of the forge, which threw a stream of ruddy light across the road, Jack soon found

the place of which he was in search. Entering the workshop, he found the blacksmith occupied in heating the tire of a cart-wheel.

Suspending his labour on Jack's appearance, the man demanded his business. Making up a similar story to that which he had told the old woman, he said he wanted to purchase a hammer and a file. The man looked hard at him.

"Answer me one question first," he said; "I half suspect you're Jack Sheppard."

"I am," replied Jack, without hesitation; for he felt assured, from the man's manner, that he might confide in him.

"You're a bold fellow, Jack," rejoined the blacksmith. "But you've done well to trust me. I'll take off your irons—for I guess that's the reason why you want the hammer and file—on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you give 'em to me."

"Readily."

Taking Jack into a shed behind the workshop, the smith in a short time freed him from his fetters. He not only did this, but supplied him with an ointment which allayed the swelling of his limbs, and crowned all by furnishing him with a jug of excellent ale.

"I'm afraid, Jack, you'll come to the gallows," observed the smith; "but if you do, I'll go to Tyburn to see you. But I'll never part with your irons."

Noticing the dragged condition Jack was in, he then fetched him a bucket of water, with which Jack cleansed himself as well as he could, and thanking the honest smith, who would take nothing for his trouble, left the shop.

Having made a tolerably good meal upon the loaf, overcome by fatigue, Jack turned into a barn in Stoke Newington, and slept till late in the day, when he

awakened much refreshed. The swelling in his limbs had also subsided. It rained heavily all day, so he did not stir forth.

Towards night, however, he ventured out, and walked on towards London. When he arrived at Hoxton, he found the walls covered with placards offering a reward for his apprehension, and he everywhere appeared to be the general subject of conversation. From a knot of idlers at a public-house, he learnt that Jonathan Wild had just ridden past, and that his setters were scouring the country in every direction.

Entering London, he bent his way towards the west-end; and, having some knowledge of a second-hand tailor's shop in Rupert Street, proceeded thither and looked out a handsome suit of mourning, with a sword, cloak, and hat, and demanded the price. The man asked twelve guineas, but after a little bargaining, he came down to ten.

Taking his new purchase under his arm, Jack proceeded to a small tavern in the same street, where, having ordered dinner, he went to a bedroom to attire himself. He had scarcely completed his toilette, when he was startled by a noise at the door, and heard his own name pronounced in no friendly accents. Fortunately, the window was not far from the ground; so, opening it gently, he dropped into a back-yard, and from thence got into the street.

Hurrying down the Haymarket, he was arrested by a crowd who were collected round a street-singer. Jack paused for a moment, and found that his own adventures formed the subject of the ballad. Not daring, however, to listen to it, he ran on.

XXVI

How Jack Sheppard attended his Mother's Funeral.

THAT night Jack walked to Paddington, and took up his quarters at a small tavern called the Wheatsheaf, near the Green. On the next morning—Sunday—the day on which he expected his mother's funeral to take place, he set out along the Harrow Road.

It was a clear, lovely October morning. The air was sharp and bracing, and the leaves, which had taken their autumnal tints, were falling from the trees. The road, which wound by Westbourne Green, gave him a full view of the hill of Hampstead, with its church, its crest of houses, and its villas peeping from out the trees. Jack's heart was too full to allow him to derive any pleasure from this scene; so he strolled on without raising his eyes, till he arrived at Kensal Green. Here he obtained some breakfast, and, mounting the hill, turned off into the fields on the right. Crossing them, he ascended an eminence, which, from its singular shape, seems to have been the site of a Roman encampment, and which commands a magnificent prospect.

Leaning upon a gate he looked down into the valley. It was the very spot from which his poor mother had gazed after her vain attempt to rescue him at the Mint; but, though he was ignorant of this, her image was alone present to him. He beheld the grey tower of Willesden Church, embosomed in its grove of trees, now clothed in all the glowing livery of autumn. There was the cottage she had inhabited for so many years—in those fields she had rambled—at that church she had prayed. And he had destroyed all this. But for him she might have been alive and happy. The recollection was too painful, and he burst into an agony of tears.

Aroused by the sound of the church bells, he resolved, at whatever risk, to attend Divine service. With this view, he descended the hill, and presently found a foot-path leading to the church.

But he was destined to have every tide of feeling awakened—every wound opened. The path he had selected conducted him to his mother's humble dwelling. When she occupied it, it was neatness itself; the little porch was overrun with creepers—the garden trim, and exquisitely kept. Now, it was a wilderness of weeds. The glass in the windows was broken—the roof unthatched—the walls dilapidated. Jack turned away with an aching heart. It seemed an emblem of the ruin he had caused.

As he proceeded, other painful reminiscences were aroused. At every step he seemed to be haunted by the ghost of the past. There was the stile on which Jonathan had sat, and he recollected distinctly the effect of his mocking glance—how it had hardened his heart against his mother's prayer.

"O God!" he exclaimed, "I am severely punished."

He had now gained the high road. The villagers were thronging to church. Rounding the corner of a garden wall, he came upon his former place of imprisonment. Some rustic hand had written upon the door, "JACK SHEPPARD'S CAGE"; and upon the wall was affixed a large placard describing his person, and offering a reward for his capture. Muffling up his face, Jack turned away; but he had not proceeded many steps when he heard a man reading aloud an account of his escapes from a newspaper.

Hastening to the church, he entered it by the very door near which his first crime had been committed. His mother's scream seemed again to ring in his ears, and he was so deeply affected that, fearful of exciting attention, he was about to quit the sacred edifice, when he was stopped by the entrance of Thames, who looked

pale as death, with Winifred leaning on his arm. They were followed by Mr. Wood, in the deepest mourning.

Shrinking involuntarily back into the farthest corner of the seat, Jack buried his face in his hands. The service began. Jack, who had not been in a place of worship for many years, was powerfully affected. Accidentally raising his eyes, he saw that he was perceived by the family from Dollis Hill, and that he was an object of the deepest interest to them.

As soon as the service was over, Thames contrived to approach him, and whispered—

“Be cautious—the funeral will take place after evening service.”

Jack would not hazard a glance at Winifred ; but, quitting the church, got into an adjoining meadow, and watched the party slowly ascending the road leading to Dollis Hill. At a turn in the road he perceived Winifred looking anxiously towards him, and when she discovered him, she waved her hand. Returning to the churchyard, he walked round it ; and on the western side, near a small yew-tree, discovered a new-made grave.

“Whose grave is this ?” he inquired of a man who was standing near it.

“I can’t say,” answered the fellow ; “but I’ll inquire from the sexton, William Morgan. Here, Peter,” he added, to a curly-headed lad, who was playing on one of the grassy tombs, “ask your father to step this way.”

The little urchin set off, and presently returned with the sexton.

“It’s Mrs. Sheppard’s grave—the mother of the famous housebreaker,” said Morgan, in answer to Jack’s inquiry ; “and it’s well they let her have Christian burial after all—for they say she destroyed herself for her son. The crowner’s ’quest sat on her yesterday—and if she hadn’t been proved out of her mind, she would have been buried at four lane-ends.”

Jack could stand no more. Placing a piece of money in Morgan's hands, he hurried out of the churchyard.

"By my soul," said the sexton, "that's as like Jack Sheppard as any one I ever seed i' my born days."

Hastening to the Six Bells, Jack ordered some refreshment, and engaged a private room, where he remained till the afternoon, absorbed in grief.

Meantime, a change had taken place in the weather. The day had become suddenly overcast. The wind blew in fitful gusts and scattered the yellow leaves from the elms and horse-chestnuts. Roused by the bell tolling for evening service, Jack left the house. On reaching the churchyard he perceived the melancholy procession descending the hill.

Just then, a carriage, drawn by four horses, drove furiously up to the Six Bells; but Jack was too much absorbed to take any notice of it.

At this moment, the bell began to toll in a peculiar manner, announcing the approach of the corpse. The gate was opened; the coffin brought into the churchyard; and Jack, whose eyes were filled with tears, saw Mr. Wood and Thames pass him, and followed at a foot's pace behind them.

Meanwhile, the clergyman, bareheaded and in his surplice, advanced to meet them. Having read the three first verses of the impressive service appointed for the burial of the dead, he returned to the church, whither the coffin was carried through the south-western door, and placed in the centre of the aisle—Mr. Wood and Thames taking their places on either side of it, and Jack at a little distance behind.

Jack had been touched in the morning, but he was now completely prostrated.

In the midst of the holy place, which he had formerly profaned, lay the body of his unfortunate mother, and he could not help looking upon her untimely end as

the retributive vengeance of Heaven for the crime he had committed.

His grief was so audible, that it attracted the notice of some of the bystanders, and Thames was obliged to beg him to control it. In doing this, he chanced to raise his eyes, and half-fancied he beheld, shaded by a pillar at the extremity of the western aisle, the horrible countenance of the thief-taker.

Before the congregation separated, the clergyman descended from the pulpit; and followed by the coffin-bearers and mourners, and by Jack at a respectful distance, entered the churchyard.

The carriage which, it has been mentioned, drove up to the Six Bells, contained four persons—Jonathan Wild, his two janizaries, and his porter, Obadiah Lemon. As soon as they had got out, the vehicle was drawn up at the back of a tree near the cage.

Having watched the funeral at some distance, Jonathan fancied he could discern the figure of Jack; but not being quite sure, he entered the church. He was daring enough to have seized and carried him off before the whole congregation, but he preferred waiting.

Satisfied with his scrutiny, he returned, despatched Abraham and Obadiah to the north-west corner of the church, placed Quilt behind a buttress near the porch, and sheltered himself behind one of the mighty elms.

The funeral procession had now approached the grave, around which many of the congregation, who were deeply interested by the sad ceremonial, had gathered. A slight rain fell at the time; and a few leaves, caught by the eddies, whirled around. Jonathan mixed with the group, and, sure of his prey, abided his time.

The clergyman, meanwhile, proceeded with the service, while the coffin was deposited at the brink of the grave.

Just as the attendants were preparing to lower the

corpse into the earth, Jack fell on his knees beside the coffin, uttering the wildest exclamations of grief, reproaching himself with the murder of his mother, and invoking the vengeance of Heaven on his own head. A murmur ran through the assemblage, by several of whom Jack was recognised. But such was the violence of his grief—such the compunction he exhibited—that all but one looked on with an eye of compassion. That person advanced towards him.

“I have killed her,” cried Jack.

“You have,” rejoined Jonathan, laying a forcible grasp on his shoulder. “You are my prisoner.”

Jack started to his feet; but before he could defend himself, his right arm was grasped by the Jew, who had silently approached him.

“Hell hounds!” he cried; “release me!”

At the same moment, Quilt Arnold rushed forward with such haste, that, stumbling over William Morgan, he precipitated him into the grave.

“Wretch!” cried Jack. “Are you not content with the crimes you have committed—but you must carry your villainy to this point? Look at the poor victim at your feet.”

Jonathan made no reply, but ordered his myrmidons to drag the prisoner along.

Thames, meanwhile, had drawn his sword, and was about to rush upon Jonathan; but he was withheld by Wood.

“Do not shed more blood,” cried the carpenter.

Groans and hoots were now raised by the crowd, and there was an evident disposition to rescue. A small brickbat was thrown, which struck Jonathan in the face.

“You shall not pass,” cried several of the crowd.

“I knew his mother, and for her sake I’ll not see this done,” cried John Dump.

“Slip on the handcuffs,” cried the thief-taker.

"And now let's see who'll dare to oppose me. I am Jonathan Wild. I have arrested him in the king's name."

A deep indignant groan followed.

"Let me see the earth thrown over her," implored Jack; "and take me where you please."

"No," thundered Wild.

"Allow him this small grace," cried Wood.

"No, I tell you," rejoined Jonathan, shouldering his way out of the crowd.

"My mother—my poor mother!" exclaimed Jack.

But in spite of his outcries and resistance, he was dragged along by Jonathan and his janizaries. At the eastern gate of the churchyard stood the carriage with the steps lowered. The mob pursued the thief-taker and his party all the way, and such missiles as could be collected were hurled at them. They even threatened to cut the traces, and take off the wheels from the carriage. The Jew got in first. The prisoner was then thrust in by Quilt. Before Jonathan followed he turned to face his assailants.

"Back!" he cried fiercely. "I am an officer in the execution of my duty. And he who opposes me in it shall feel the weight of my hand."

He then sprang into the coach, the door of which was closed by Obadiah, who mounted the box.

"To Newgate," cried Jonathan, putting his head out of the window.

A deep roar followed this order, and several missiles were launched at the vehicle, which was driven off at a furious pace.

And, while her son was reconveyed to prison, the body of the unfortunate Mrs. Sheppard was committed to the earth.

XXVII

How Jack Sheppard was brought back to Newgate.

JACK SHEPPARD'S escape from Newgate on the night of the 15th of October was not discovered till the following morning ; for although the intelligence was brought by several parties to the Lodge in the course of the night, Austin, who was the officer in attendance, paid no attention to them.

After pursuing the fugitive as before related, Jonathan Wild returned to his own habitation, where he was occupied during the remainder of the night, with Quilt Arnold and Obadiah Lemon, in removing everything which, in case of search, might tend to criminate him. Satisfied in this respect, he flung himself into a chair, for his iron frame seldom required the indulgence of a bed, and sought an hour's repose before he began the villainies of another day.

He was aroused from his slumber, about six o'clock, by the return of Abraham Mendez, who, not choosing to confess that Jack had eluded his vigilance, contented himself with stating that he had kept watch till daybreak, when he had carefully searched the field, and finding no trace of him, had thought it better to return.

This information was received by Jonathan with a lowering brow. He comforted himself, however, with the certainty which he felt of capturing his prey on the Sunday. His breakfast despatched, which he ate with a wolfish appetite, he walked over to Newgate, chuckling as he went at the consternation which his appearance would create amongst the turnkeys.

Entering the Lodge, the first person he beheld was Austin, who was only just up, and whose toilette ap-

peared scarcely completed. A glance satisfied Jonathan that the turnkey was not aware of the prisoner's escape ; and he resolved not to destroy what he considered a good jest, by a premature disclosure of it.

"You are out betimes this morning, Mr. Wild," observed Austin, as he put on his coat, and adjusted his minor bob. "Something fresh on hand, I suppose?"

"I'm come to inquire after Jack Sheppard," returned Jonathan.

"Don't alarm yourself about him, sir," replied Austin. "He's safe enough, I assure you."

"I should like to satisfy myself on that score," rejoined Wild dryly.

"So you shall, sir," replied Austin, who at this moment recollected, with some uneasiness, the applications at the Lodge door during the night. "I hope you don't imagine anything has gone wrong, sir?"

"It matters not what I think," replied Wild. "Come with me to the Castle."

"Instantly, sir," replied Austin ; "instantly. Here, Caliban, attend to the door, and keep the wicket locked till I return. D'ye hear? Now, sir."

Taking the keys, he led the way, followed by Jonathan, who chuckled internally at the shock that awaited the poor fellow. The door was opened, and Austin entered the cell, when he absolutely recoiled before the spectacle he beheld, and could scarcely have looked more alarmed if the prison had tumbled about his ears. Petrified and speechless, he turned an imploring look at Wild, who was himself filled with astonishment at the pile of rubbish lying before him.

"'Sdeath!" cried Jonathan, staring at the breach in the wall. "Some one *must* have assisted him. Unless he has dealings with the devil, he could never have done this alone."

"I firmly believe he *has* dealings with the devil," replied Austin, trembling from head to foot. "But

perhaps he has not got beyond the room above. It's as strong, if not stronger, than this. I'll see."

So saying, he scrambled over the rubbish, and got into the chimney. But though the breach was large enough to admit him below, he could not squeeze his bulky person through the aperture into the Red Room.

"I believe he's gone," he said, turning to Jonathan. "The door's open, and the room empty."

"You believe—you *know* it," replied Jonathan, fixing one of his sternest and most searching glances upon him. "Nothing you can say to the contrary will convince me that you have not been accessory to his flight."

"I, sir!—I swear——"

"Tush!" interrupted Jonathan harshly. "I shall state my suspicions to the governor. Come down with me to the Lodge directly. All further examinations must be conducted in the presence of proper witnesses."

With these words he strode out of the room, darted down the stone stairs, and, on his arrival at the Lodge, seized the rope of the great bell communicating with the interior of the prison, which he rang violently.

As this was never done, except in some case of great emergency, the application was instantly answered by all the other turnkeys, by Marvel, the four partners, and Mrs. Spurling. Nothing could exceed the dismay of these personages when they learnt why they had been summoned. All seemed infected with Austin's terrors except Mrs. Spurling, who did not dare to exhibit her satisfaction otherwise than by privately pinching the arm of her intended husband.

Headed by Jonathan, all the turnkeys then repaired to the upper part of the gaol, and, approaching the Red Room by a circuitous route, several doors were unlocked, and they came upon the scene of Jack's exploits. Stopping before each door, they took up the plates of the locks, examined the ponderous bolts, and were struck with the utmost astonishment at what

they beheld. Arriving at the chapel, their wonder increased. All the gaolers declared it utterly impossible he could have accomplished his astonishing task unaided; but who had lent him assistance was the question they were unable to answer. Proceeding to the entry to the Lower Leads, they came to the two strong doors, and their surprise was so great at Jack's marvellous performance, that they could scarcely persuade themselves that human ingenuity could have accomplished it.

"Here's a door," remarked Ireton, when he got to that nearest the leads, "which I could have sworn would have resisted anything. I shall have no faith in future in bolts and bars."

Mounting the roof of the prison, they traced the fugitive's course to the farther extremity of the building, where they found his blanket attached to the spike, proving that he escaped in that direction.

After severely examining Austin and finding it proved, on the testimony of his fellow gaolers, that he could not have aided Jack in his flight, Jonathan retracted his harsh sentence, and even went so far as to say that he would act as mediator between him and the governor.

This was some satisfaction to the poor fellow, who was dreadfully frightened, as indeed he might well be, it being the opinion of the gaolers and others who afterwards examined the place, that Jack had accomplished, single-handed, in a few hours, and, as far as it could be ascertained, with imperfect implements, what it would have taken half-a-dozen men several days, provided with proper tools, to effect. In their opinion, a hundred pounds would not repair the damage done to the prison.

As soon as Jack's escape became known, thousands of persons flocked to Newgate to behold his workmanship; and the gaolers reaped an abundant harvest from their curiosity. Jonathan, meanwhile, main-

tained profound secrecy as to his hopes of capturing the fugitive; and when Jack was brought back to Newgate on the Sunday evening, his arrival was wholly unexpected. At a little after five, on that day, four horses dashed round the corner of the Old Bailey, and drew up before the door of the Lodge. Hearing the stoppage, Austin rushed out, and could scarcely believe his eyes when he beheld Jack Sheppard in the custody of Quilt Arnold and Abraham Mendez.

Jack's recapture was speedily made known to all the officers of the gaol, and the Lodge was instantly crowded. The delight of the turnkeys was beyond all bounds; but poor Mrs. Spurling was in a state of distraction, and began to abuse Jonathan so violently, that her future husband was obliged to lay forcible hands upon her and drag her away.

By Wild's command the prisoner was taken to the Condemned Hold, whither he was followed by the whole posse of officers and by the partners; two of whom carried large hammers and two the fetters. There was only one prisoner in the ward. He was chained to the ground, but started up at their approach. It was Blueskin. When he beheld Jack, he uttered a deep groan.

"Captain," he cried, in a voice of the bitterest anguish, "have these dogs again hunted you down? If you hadn't been so unlucky, I should have been with you before to-morrow night."

Jack made no answer, nor did he even cast his eyes upon his follower. But Jonathan, fixing a terrible look upon him, cried—

"Ha! say you so? You must be looked to. My lads," he continued, addressing the partners, "when you've finished this job, give that fellow a fresh set of darbies. I suspect he has been at work upon those he has on."

"The link of the chain next the staple is sawn

through," said Ireton, stooping to examine Blueskin's fetters.

"Search him, and iron him afresh," commanded Jonathan. "But first let us secure Sheppard. We'll then remove them both to the Middle Stone Hold, where a watch shall be kept over them night and day till they're taken to Tyburn. As they're so fond of each other's society, they shan't part company even on that occasion, but shall swing from the same tree."

"You'll never live to see that day," cried Blueskin, fixing a menacing look upon him.

"What weight are these irons?" asked Jonathan coolly, addressing one of the partners.

"More than three hundredweight, sir," replied the man. "They're the heaviest set we have, and were forged expressly for Captain Sheppard."

"They're not half heavy enough," replied Wild. "Let him be handcuffed, and doubly ironed on both legs; and when we get him into the Stone Ward, he shall not only be chained down to the ground, but shall have two additional fetters running through the main links, fastened on each side of him. We'll see whether he'll get rid of his new bonds," he added, with a brutal laugh, which was echoed by the bystanders.

"Mark me," said Jack sternly; "I have twice broken out of this prison in spite of all your precautions. And were you to load me with thrice the weight of iron you have ordered, you should not prevent my escaping a third time."

"That's right, captain," cried Blueskin. "We'll give them the slip yet, and hang that butcherly thief-taker upon his own gibbet."

"Be silent, dog," cried Jonathan. And with his clenched hand he struck him a violent blow in the face.

For the first time perhaps in his life he repented of his brutality. The blow was scarcely dealt, when with

a bound like that of a tiger, Blueskin sprang upon him. The chain, which had been partially cut through, snapped near the staple.

Before any assistance could be rendered by the gaolers, who stood astounded, Blueskin had got Wild in his clutches. His strength has been described as prodigious; but now, heightened by the desire for vengeance, it was irresistible. Jonathan, though a very powerful man, was like an infant in his gripe. Catching hold of his chin, he bent back the neck, while with his left hand he pulled out a clasp-knife, which he opened with his teeth, and grasping Wild's head with his arm, notwithstanding his resistance, cut deeply into his throat.

The folds of a thick muslin neckcloth in some degree protected him, but the gash was desperate. Blueskin drew the knife across his throat a second time, widening and deepening the wound; and, wrenching back the head to get it into a more favourable position, would infallibly have severed it from the trunk, if the officers, who by this time had recovered from their terror, had not thrown themselves upon him, and withheld him.

"Now's your time," cried Blueskin, struggling desperately with his assailants, and inflicting severe cuts with his knife. "Fly, captain—fly!"

Aroused to a sense of the possibility of escape, Jack, who had viewed the deadly assault with savage satisfaction, burst from his captors and made for the door. Blueskin fought his way towards it, and exerting all his strength, cutting right and left as he proceeded, reached it at the same time.

Jack, in all probability, would have escaped, if Langley, who was left in the Lodge, had not been alarmed at the noise, and rushed thither. Seeing Jack at liberty, he instantly seized him, and a struggle commenced.

At this moment Blueskin came up, and kept off the officers with his knife. He used his utmost efforts to liberate Jack from Langley ; but, closely pressed on all sides, he was not able to render any effectual assistance.

"Fly!" cried Jack ; "escape, if you can ; don't mind me."

Casting one look of anguish at his leader, Blueskin then darted down the passage.

The only persons in the Lodge were Mrs. Spurling and Marvel. Hearing the noise of the scuffle, the tapstress, fancying it was Jack making an effort to escape, in spite of the remonstrances of the executioner, threw open the wicket. Blueskin, therefore, had nothing to stop him. Dashing through the open door, he crossed the Old Bailey, plunged into a narrow court, on the opposite side of the way, and was out of sight in a minute, baffling all pursuit. On their return, the gaolers raised up Jonathan, who was weltering in his blood, and who appeared to be dying. Efforts were made to stanch his wounds, and surgical assistance sent for.

"Has he escaped?" asked the thief-taker faintly.

"Blueskin?" said Ireton.

"No—Sheppard?" rejoined Wild.

"No, no, sir," replied Ireton. "He's here."

"That's right," replied Wild, with a ghastly smile.

"Remove him to the Middle Stone Hold—watch over him night and day, do you mind?"

"I do, sir."

"Irons—heavy irons—night and day."

"Depend upon it, sir."

"Go with him to Tyburn—never lose sight of him till the noose is tied. Where's Marvel?"

"Here, sir," replied the executioner.

"A hundred guineas if you hang Jack Sheppard. I have it about me. Take it, if I die."

"Never fear, sir," replied Marvel.

"Oh! that I could live to see it," gasped Jonathan. And, with a hideous expression of pain, he fainted.

"He's dead!" exclaimed Austin.

"I am content," said Jack. "My mother is avenged. Take me to the Stone Room. Blueskin, you are a true friend."

The body of Jonathan was then conveyed to his own habitation, while Jack was taken to the Middle Stone Room, and ironed in the manner Wild had directed.

XXVIII

What happened at Dollis Hill.

"At length this tragedy is at an end," said Mr. Wood, as, having seen the earth thrown over the remains of the unfortunate Mrs. Sheppard, he turned to quit the churchyard. "Let us hope that, like her who 'loved much,' her sins are forgiven her."

Without another word, and accompanied by Thames, he then took his way to Dollis Hill in a state of the deepest depression. Thames did not attempt to offer him any consolation, for he was almost as much dejected. The weather harmonised with their feelings. It rained slightly, and a thick mist gathered in the air and obscured the beautiful prospect.

On his arrival at Dollis Hill, Mr. Wood was so much exhausted that he was obliged to retire to his own room, where he continued for some hours overpowered by grief. The two lovers sat together, and their sole discourse turned upon Jack and his ill-fated mother.

As the night advanced, Mr. Wood again made his appearance in a more composed frame of mind, and, at his daughter's earnest sollicitation, was induced to partake of some refreshment. An hour was then

passed in conversation as to the possibility of rendering any assistance to Jack, in deploring his unhappy destiny, and in the consideration of the course to be pursued in reference to Jonathan Wild.

While they were thus occupied, a maid-servant entered the room, and stated that a person was without who had a packet for Captain Darrell, which must be delivered into his own hands. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of Wood and Winifred, Thames instantly followed the domestic, and found a man, with his face muffled up, at the door, as she had described. Somewhat alarmed at his appearance, Thames laid his hand upon his sword.

"Fear nothing, sir," said the man, in a voice which Thames instantly recognised as that of Blueskin. "I am come to render you a service. There are the packets which my captain hazarded his life to procure for you, and which he said would establish your right to the estates of the Trenchard family. There are also the letters which were scattered about Wild's room after the murder of Sir Rowland. And there," he added, placing in his hands a heavy bag of money, and a pocket-book, "is a sum little short of fifteen thousand pounds."

"How have you procured these things?" asked Thames, in the utmost astonishment.

"I carried them off on the fatal night when we got into Wild's house, and you were struck down," replied Blueskin. "They have ever since been deposited in a place of safety. You have nothing more to fear from Wild."

"How so?" asked Thames.

"I have saved the executioner a labour, by cutting his throat," replied Blueskin. "And may I be cursed if ever I did anything in my whole life which gave me so much satisfaction."

"Almighty God! is this possible?" exclaimed Thames.

"You will find it true," replied Blueskin. "All I regret is, that I failed in liberating the captain. If he had got off, they might have hanged me, and welcome."

"What can be done for him?" cried Thames.

"That's not an easy question to answer," rejoined Blueskin. "But I shall watch night and day about Newgate, in the hope of getting him out. He wouldn't require my aid, but before I stopped Jonathan's mouth, he had ordered him to be doubly ironed, and constantly watched. And though the villain can't see his orders executed, I've no doubt some one else will."

"Poor Jack," exclaimed Thames. "I would sacrifice all my fortune—all my hopes—to liberate him."

"If you're in earnest," rejoined Blueskin, "give me that bag of gold. It contains a thousand pounds; and if all other schemes fail, I'll engage to free him on the way to Tyburn."

"May I trust you?" hesitated Thames.

"Why did I not keep the money when I had it?" returned Blueskin angrily. "Not a farthing of it shall be expended except in the captain's service."

"Take it," replied Thames.

"You have saved his life," replied Blueskin. "And now, mark me. You owe what I have done for you to him, not to me. Had I not known that you and your affianced bride are dearer to him than life, I should have used this money to secure my own safety. Take it, and take the estates, in Captain Sheppard's name. Promise me one thing before I leave you."

"What is it?" asked Thames.

"If the captain is taken to Tyburn, be near the place of execution—at the end of the Edgeware Road."

"I will."

"In case of need, you will lend a helping hand?"

"Yes—yes."

"Swear it!"

"I do."

"Enough!" rejoined Blueskin.

And he departed, just as Wood, who had become alarmed by Thames's long absence, made his appearance, with a blunderbuss in his hand.

Hastily acquainting him with the treasures he had unexpectedly obtained, Thames returned to the room to apprise Winifred of his good-fortune. The packets were hastily broken open; and while Wood was absorbed in the perusal of the despatch addressed to him by Sir Rowland, Thames sought out, and found the letter which he had been prevented from finishing on the fatal night at Jonathan Wild's. As soon as he had read it, he let it fall from his grasp. Winifred instantly picked it up.

"You are no longer Thames Darrell," she said, casting her eyes rapidly over it, "but the Marquis de Chatillon!"

"My father was of the blood-royal of France," exclaimed Thames.

"Heyday! what's this?" cried Wood, looking up from beneath his spectacles. "Who—who is the Marquis de Chatillon?"

"Your adopted son, Thames Darrell," answered Winifred.

"And the marchioness is your daughter," added Thames.

"O Lord!" ejaculated Wood. "My head fairly turns round. So many distresses—so many joys coming at the same time are too much for me. Read that letter, Thames—my lord marquis, I mean. Read it, and you'll find that your unfortunate uncle, Sir Rowland, surrenders to you all the estates in Lancashire. You've nothing to do but to take possession."

"What a strange history is mine!" said Thames. "Kidnapped, and sent to France by one uncle, it was my lot to fall into the hands of another—my father's own brother, the Marshal Gaucher de Chatillon; to

whom, and to the Cardinal Dubois, I owed all my good-fortune."

"The ways of Providence are inscrutable," observed Wood.

"When in France, I heard from the marshal that his brother had perished in London on the night of the Great Storm. It was supposed he was drowned in crossing the river, as his body had never been found. Little did I imagine at the time that it was my own father to whom he referred."

"I think I remember reading something about your father in the papers," observed Wood. "Wasn't he in some way connected with the Jacobite plots?"

"He was," replied Thames. "He had been many years in this country before his assassination took place. In this letter, which is addressed to my ill-fated mother, he speaks of his friendship for Sir Rowland, whom it seems he had known abroad; but entreats her to keep the marriage secret for a time, for reasons which are not fully developed."

"And so Sir Rowland murdered his friend," remarked Wood. "Crime upon crime."

"Unconsciously, perhaps," replied Thames. "But, be it as it may, he is now beyond the reach of earthly punishment."

"But Wild still lives," cried Wood.

"He, also, has paid the penalty of his offences," returned Thames. "He has fallen by the hand of Blueskin, who brought me these packets."

"Thank God for that!" cried Wood heartily. "I could almost forgive the wretch the injury he did me in depriving me of my poor dear wife—no, not quite *that*," he added, a little confused.

"And now," said Thames (for we must still preserve the name), "you will no longer defer my happiness."

"Hold!" interposed Winifred gravely. "I release

you from your promise. A carpenter's daughter is no fit match for a peer of France."

"If my dignity must be purchased by the loss of you, I renounce it," cried Thames. "You will not make it valueless in my eyes," he added, catching her in his arms, and pressing her to his breast.

"Be it as you please," replied Winifred. "My lips would belie my heart, were I to refuse you."

"And now, father, your blessing—your consent?" cried Thames.

"You have both," replied Wood fervently. "I am too much honoured—too happy in the union. Oh! that I should live to be father-in-law to a peer of France! What would my poor wife say to it, if she could come to life again? O Thames!—my lord marquis, I mean—you have made me the happiest—the proudest of mankind."

Not many days after this event, on a bright October morning, the bells rang a merry peal from the old grey tower of Willesden Church. All the village was assembled in the churchyard. Young and old were dressed in their gayest apparel; and it was evident, from the smiles that lighted up every countenance, from the roguish looks of the younger swains, and the demure expression of several pretty rustic maidens, that a ceremony which never fails to interest all classes—a wedding—was about to take place.

At the gate opening upon the road leading to Dollis Hill were stationed William Morgan and John Dump. Presently, two carriages dashed down the hill, and drew up before it. From the first of these alighted Thames, or, as he must now be styled, the Marquis de Chatillon. From the second descended Mr. Wood—and after him came his daughter.

The sun never shone upon a lovelier couple than now approached the altar. The church was crowded to excess by the numbers eager to witness the cere-

mony; and, as soon as it was over, the wedded pair were followed to the carriage, and the loudest benedictions uttered for their happiness. In spite of the tumultuous joy which agitated him, the bridegroom could not prevent the intrusion of some saddening thoughts, as he reflected upon the melancholy scene which he had so recently witnessed in the same place.

The youthful couple had been seated in the carriage a few minutes, when they were joined by Mr. Wood, who had merely absented himself to see that a public breakfast, which he had ordered at the Six Bells for all who chose to partake of it, was in readiness. He likewise gave directions, that in the after part of the day a whole bullock should be roasted on the green, and distributed, together with a barrel of the strongest ale.

In the evening a band of village musicians, accompanied by most of the young inhabitants of Willesden, strolled out to Dollis Hill, where they formed a rustic concert under the great elm before the door. Here they were regaled with another plentiful meal by the hospitable carpenter, who personally superintended the repast. These festivities, however, were not witnessed by the newly married pair, who had departed immediately after the ceremony for Manchester.

XXIX

How Jack Sheppard was taken to Westminster Hall.

LOADED with the heaviest fetters, and constantly watched by two of the gaoler's assistants, who neither quitted him for a single moment, nor suffered any visitor to approach him, Jack Sheppard found all attempts to escape impracticable.

He was confined in the Middle Stone Ward, a

spacious apartment, with good light and air, situated over the gateway on the western side, and allotted to him, not for his own convenience, but for that of the keepers, who, if he had been placed in a gloomier or more incommodious dungeon, would have necessarily had to share it with him.

Through this, his last trial, Jack's spirits never deserted him. He seemed resigned but cheerful, and held frequent and serious discourses with the ordinary, who felt satisfied of his sincere penitence. The only circumstance which served to awaken a darker feeling in his breast was, that his implacable foe, Jonathan Wild, had survived the wound inflicted by Blueskin, and was slowly recovering.

As soon as he could be moved with safety, Jonathan had himself transported to Newgate, where he was carried into the Middle Ward, that he might feast his eyes upon his victim. Having seen every precaution taken to insure his safe custody, he departed, muttering to himself, "I shall yet live to see him hanged—I shall live to see him hanged."

Animated by his insatiate desire of vengeance, he seemed to gain strength daily—so much so, that within a fortnight after receiving his wound he was able to stir abroad.

On Thursday, the 12th of November, after having endured nearly a month's imprisonment, Jack Sheppard was conveyed from Newgate to Westminster Hall. He was placed in a coach, handcuffed, and heavily fettered, and guarded by a vast posse of officers to Temple Bar, where a fresh relay of constables escorted him to Westminster.

By this time, Jack's reputation had risen to such a height with the populace—his exploits having become the universal theme of discourse, that the streets were almost impassable for the crowds collected to obtain a view of him.

The vast area in front of Westminster Hall was thronged with people, and it was only by a vigorous application of their staves that the constables could force a passage for the vehicle. At length, however, the prisoner was got out, when, such was the rush of the multitude, that several persons were trampled down, and received severe injuries.

Arrived in the Hall, the prisoner's handcuffs were removed, and he was taken before the Court of King's Bench. The record of his conviction at the Old Bailey sessions was then read ; and as no objection was offered to it, the Attorney-General moved that his execution might take place on Monday next.

Upon this, Jack earnestly and eloquently addressed himself to the bench, and besought that a petition, which he had prepared to be laid before the king, might be read.

This request, however, was refused ; and he was told that the only way in which he could entitle himself to his majesty's clemency, would be by discovering who had abetted him in his last escape ; the strongest suspicions being entertained that he had not effected it alone.

Sheppard replied by a solemn assertion, "that he had received no assistance except from Heaven !"—an answer for which he was immediately reprimanded by the court. It having been stated that it was wholly impossible he could have removed his irons in the way he represented, he offered, if his handcuffs were replaced, to take them off in the presence of the court. The proposal, however, was not acceded to ; and the Chief Justice Powis, after enumerating his various offences, and commenting upon their heinousness, awarded sentence of death against him for the following Monday.

As Jack was removed, he noticed Jonathan Wild at a little distance from him, eyeing him with a look of

the most savage satisfaction. The thief-taker's throat was bound up with thick folds of linen, and his face had a ghastly and cadaverous look, which communicated an undefinable and horrible expression in his glances.

Meanwhile, the mob outside had prodigiously increased, and had begun to exhibit some disposition to riot. The coach in which the prisoner had been conveyed was already broken in pieces, and the driver was glad to escape with life. Terrific shouts were raised by the rabble, who threatened to tear Wild in pieces if he showed himself.

Amid this tumult, several men, armed with tremendous bludgeons, with their faces besmeared with grease and soot, and otherwise disguised, were observed to be urging the populace to attempt a rescue. They were headed by an athletic-looking, swarthy-featured man, who was armed with a cutlass, which he waved over his head to cheer on his companions.

These desperadoes had been the most active in demolishing the coach, and now, being supported by the rabble, they audaciously approached the very portals of the ancient Hall. The shouts, yells, and groans which they uttered, and which were echoed by the concourse in the rear, were perfectly frightful.

Jonathan, who, with the other constables, had reconnoitered this band, and recognised in its ringleader Blueskin, commanded the constables to follow him, and make a sally for the purpose of seizing him. Enfeebled by his wound, Wild had lost much of his strength, though nothing of his ferocity and energy, and, fiercely assailing Blueskin, he made a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to apprehend him.

He was, however, instantly beaten back; and the fury of the mob was so great that it was with difficulty he could effect a retreat. The whole force of the constables, gaolers, and others, was required to keep

the crowd out of the Hall. The doors were closed and barricaded, and the mob threatened to burst them open if Jack was not delivered to them.

Things now began to wear so serious an aspect, that a messenger was secretly despatched to the Savoy for troops, and in half-an-hour a regiment of the guards arrived, who, by dint of great exertion, succeeded in partially dispersing the tumultuous assemblage. Another coach was then procured, in which the prisoner was placed.

Jack's appearance was hailed with the loudest cheers, but when Jonathan followed and took a place beside him in the vehicle, determined, he said, never to lose sight of him, the abhorrence of the multitude was expressed by execrations, hoots, and yells of the most terrific kind. So dreadful were these shouts, as to produce an effect upon the hardened feelings of Jonathan, who shrank out of sight.

It was well for him that he had taken his place by Sheppard, as regard for the latter alone prevented the deadliest missiles being hurled at him. As it was, the mob went on alternately hooting and huzzaing as the names of Wild and Sheppard were pronounced, while some individuals, bolder than the rest, thrust their faces into the coach-window, and assured Jack that he should never be taken to Tyburn.

"We'll see that, you yelping hounds!" rejoined Jonathan, glaring fiercely at them.

In this way Jack was brought back to Newgate, and again chained down in the Middle Ward. It was late before Jonathan ventured to his own house, where he remained up all night, and kept his janizaries and other assistants well armed.

XXX

How Jonathan Wild's House was burnt down.

THE day appointed for the execution was now close at hand, and the prisoner, who seemed to have abandoned all hopes of escape, turned his thoughts entirely from worldly considerations.

On Sunday he was conveyed to the chapel, through which he had passed on the occasion of his great escape, and once more took his seat in the Condemned Pew. The Reverend Mr. Purney, the ordinary, who had latterly conceived a great regard for Jack, addressed him in a discourse, which, while it tended to keep alive his feelings of penitence, was calculated to afford him much consolation. The chapel was crowded to excess.

But here—even here—the demon was suffered to intrude, and Jack's thoughts were distracted by Jonathan Wild, who stood at a little distance from him, and kept his bloodthirsty eyes fixed on him during the whole of the service.

On that night, an extraordinary event occurred, which convinced the authorities that every precaution must be taken in conducting Jack to Tyburn—a fact of which they had been previously made aware, though scarcely to the same extent, by the riotous proceedings near Westminster Hall.

About nine o'clock, an immense mob collected before the Lodge at Newgate. It was quite dark; but as some of the assemblage carried links, it was soon ascertained to be headed by the same party who had mainly incited the former disturbance. Amongst the ringleaders was Blueskin, whose swarthy features and athletic figure were easily distinguished. Another was

Baptist Kettleby, and a third, in a Dutch dress, was recognised, by his grizzled beard, as the skipper Van Galgebrok.

Before an hour had elapsed, the concourse was fearfully increased. The area in front of the gaol was completely filled. Attempts were made upon the door of the Lodge; but it was too strong to be forced. A cry was then raised by the leaders to attack Wild's house, and the fury of the mob was instantly directed to that quarter. Wrenched from their holds, the iron palisades in front of the thief-taker's dwelling were used as weapons to burst open the door.

While this was passing, Jonathan opened one of the upper windows and fired several shots upon the assailants. But though he made Blueskin and Kettleby his chief marks, he missed both.

The sight of the thief-taker increased the fury of the mob to a fearful degree. Terrific yells rent the air. The heavy weapons thundered against the door, and it speedily yielded to their efforts.

"Come on, my lads!" vociferated Blueskin; "we'll unkennel the old fox."

As he spoke, several shots were fired from the upper part of the house, and two men fell mortally wounded. But this only incensed the assailing party the more.

With a drawn cutlass in one hand, and a cocked pistol in the other, Blueskin rushed upstairs. The landing was defended by Quilt Arnold and the Jew. The former was shot by Blueskin through the head, and his body fell over the banisters. The Jew, who was paralysed by his companion's fate, offered no resistance, and was instantly seized.

"Where is your accursed master?" demanded Blueskin, holding the sword to his throat.

The Jew did not speak, but pointed to the audience-chamber. Committing him to the custody of others, Blueskin, followed by a numerous band, darted in that

direction. The door was locked ; but, with the bars of iron, it was speedily burst open. Several of the assailants carried links, so that the room was in a blaze of light.

Jonathan, however, was nowhere to be seen. Rushing towards the entrance of the Well Hole, Blueskin touched the secret spring. He was not there. Opening the trap-door, he then descended to the vaults—searched each cell, and every nook and corner separately. Wild had escaped.

Robbed of their prey, the fury of the mob became ungovernable. At length, at the end of a passage next to the cell where Mrs. Sheppard had been confined, Blueskin discovered a trap-door, which he had not previously noticed. It was instantly burst open, when the horrible stench that issued from it, convinced them that it must be a receptacle for the murdered victims of the thief-taker.

Holding a link into the place, which had the appearance of a deep pit, Blueskin noticed a body richly dressed. He dragged it out, and perceiving, in spite of the decayed frame, that it was the body of Sir Rowland Trenchard, commanded his attendants to convey it upstairs—an order which was promptly obeyed.

Returning to the audience-chamber, Blueskin had the Jew brought before him. The body of Sir Rowland was then laid on the large table. Opposite to it was placed the Jew.

Seeing, from the threatening looks of his captors, that they were about to wreak their vengeance upon him, the miserable wretch besought mercy in abject terms, and charged his master with the most atrocious crimes. His relation of the murder of Sir Rowland petrified even his fierce auditors.

One of the cases in Jonathan's museum was now burst open, and a rope taken from it. In spite of his shrieks, the miserable Jew was then dragged into the

Well Hole, and the rope being tied round his neck, he was launched from the bridge.

The vengeance of the assailants did not stop here. They broke open the entrance into Jonathan's store-room—plundered it of everything valuable—ransacked every closet, drawer, and secret hiding-place, and stripped them of their contents.

Large hoards of money were discovered, gold and silver plate, cases of watches, and various precious articles. Nothing, in short, portable or valuable, was left. Old implements of housebreaking were discovered; and the thief-taker's most hidden depositories were laid bare.

The work of plunder over, that of destruction commenced. Straw and other combustibles being collected, were placed in the middle of the audience-chamber. On these were thrown all the horrible contents of Jonathan's museum, together with the body of Sir Rowland Trenchard. The whole was then fired, and in a few minutes the room was in a blaze. Not content with this, the assailants set fire to the house in half-a-dozen other places; and the progress of the flames was rapid and destructive.

Meanwhile, the object of all this fearful disturbance had made his escape to Newgate, from the roof of which he witnessed the destruction of his premises. He saw the flames burst from the windows, and perhaps in that maddening spectacle suffered torture equivalent to some of the crimes he had committed.

While he was thus standing, the flames of his house, which made the whole street as light as day, and ruddily illumined the faces of the mob below, betrayed him to them, and he was speedily driven from his position by a shower of stones and other missiles.

The mob now directed their attention to Newgate, and, from their threats, appeared determined to fire it. Ladders, pavior's rams, sledge-hammers, and other

destructive implements were procured, and, in all probability, their purpose would have been effected but for the opportune arrival of a detachment of the guards, who dispersed them, not without some loss of life. Several prisoners were taken, but the ringleaders escaped. Engines were brought to play upon Wild's premises, and upon the adjoining houses. The latter were saved; but of the former, nothing but the blackened stone walls were found standing on the morrow.

XXXI

The Procession to Tyburn.

THE noise of this disturbance did not fail to reach the interior of the prison. In fact, the reflection of the flames lighted up the ward in which Jack Sheppard was confined. The night before his execution was, therefore, passed in a most anxious state of mind; nor was his uneasiness allayed by the appearance of Jonathan Wild, who, after he had been driven from the roof of the gaol, repaired to the Middle Stone Ward in a fit of ungovernable passion, to vent his rage upon the prisoner, whom he looked upon as the cause of the present calamity. Such was his fury, that if he had not been restrained by the presence of the two turnkeys, he might perhaps have anticipated the course of justice, by laying violent hands upon his victim.

After venting his wrath in the wildest manner, and uttering the most dreadful execrations, Jonathan retired to another part of the prison, where he passed the night in consultation with the governor, as to the best means of conveying the prisoner securely to Tyburn.

Mr. Pitt endeavoured to dissuade him from attending in person, representing the great risk he would incur from the mob which was certain to be assembled. But Jonathan was not to be deterred.

"I have sworn to see him hanged," he said, "and nothing shall keep me away—nothing, by——"

By Wild's advice, the usual constabulary force was greatly augmented. Messengers were despatched to all the constables and head-boroughs to be in attendance—to the sheriffs to have an extraordinary number of their officers in attendance—and to the Savoy, to obtain the escort of a troop of grenadier guards. In short, more preparations were made than if a state criminal was about to be executed.

The morning of Monday, the 16th of November 1724, at length dawned. It was a dull, foggy day, and the atmosphere was so thick and heavy that, at eight o'clock, the curious who arrived near the prison could scarcely discern the tower of Saint Sepulchre's Church.

By-and-by the tramp of horses' feet was heard slowly ascending Snow Hill, and presently a troop of grenadier guards rode into the area facing Newgate. These were presently joined by a regiment of foot. A large body of the constables of Westminster next made their appearance, the chief of whom entered the Lodge, where they were speedily joined by the civic authorities. At nine o'clock the sheriffs arrived, followed by their officers and javelin-men.

Meantime, the Stone Hall was crowded by all the inmates of the gaol—debtors, felons, turnkeys, and officers—who could obtain permission to witness the ceremony of the prisoner's irons being struck off. Caliban, who, through the interest of Mr. Ireton, was appointed to the office, stood with the hammer in one hand, and a punch in the other, near the great stone block, ready to fulfil his duty. Close behind him stood the tall, gaunt figure of Marvel, with his large,

bony hands, his scraggy neck, and ill-favoured countenance. Next to the executioner stood his wife—the former Mrs. Spurling. Mrs. Marvel held her handkerchief to her eyes, and appeared in great distress. But her husband, whose deportment to her was considerably changed since the fatal knot had been tied, paid no attention whatever to her grief.

At this moment, the bell of Newgate began to toll, and was answered by another bell from Saint Sepulchre's. The great door of the Stone Hall was thrown open, and the sheriffs, preceded by the javelin-men, entered the room. They were followed by Jonathan, who carried a stout stick under his arm, and planted himself near the stone. Not a word was uttered by the assemblage ; but a hush of expectation reigned throughout.

Another door was next opened, and, preceded by the ordinary, with the sacred volume in his hand, the prisoner entered the room. Though encumbered by his irons, his step was firm, and his demeanour dignified. His countenance was pale as death, but not a muscle quivered ; nor did he betray the slightest appearance of fear. On the contrary, it was impossible to look at him without perceiving that his resolution was unshaken. Advancing with a slow firm step to the stone block, he placed his left foot upon it, drew himself up to his full height, and fixed a look so stern upon Jonathan, that the thief-taker quailed before it.

The black, meantime, began to ply his hammer, and speedily unriveted the chains. The first stroke appeared to arouse all the vindictive passions of Jonathan. Fixing a ferocious and exulting look upon Jack Sheppard, he exclaimed—

“At length, my vengeance is complete.”

“Wretch !” cried Jack, raising his hand in a manacng manner, “your triumph will be short-lived. Before a year has expired, you will share the same fate.”

"If I do, I care not," rejoined Wild; "I shall have lived to see you hanged."

"O Jack, dear, dear Jack!" cried Mrs. Marvel, who was now quite dissolved in tears; "I shall never survive this scene."

"Hold your tongue, hussy!" cried her husband gruffly. "Women ought never to show themselves on these occasions, unless they can behave themselves properly."

"Farewell, Jack," cried twenty voices.

Sheppard looked round, and exchanged kindly glances with several of those who addressed him.

"My limbs feel so light, now that my irons are removed," he observed with a smile, "that I am half inclined to dance."

"You'll dance upon nothing presently," rejoined Jonathan brutally.

"Farewell for ever," said Jack, extending his hand to Mrs. Marvel.

"Farewell!" blubbered the executioner's wife, pressing his hand to her lips. "Here are a pair of gloves and a nosegay for you. Oh, dear!—oh, dear! Be careful of him," she added to her husband, "and get it over quickly, or never expect to see me again."

"Peace, fool!" cried Marvel angrily. "Do you think I don't know my own business?"

Austin and Langley then advanced to the prisoner, and, twining their arms round his, led him down to the Lodge, whither he was followed by the sheriffs, the ordinary, Wild, and the other officials.

Meantime, every preparation had been made outside for his departure. At the end of two long lines of foot-guards stood the cart, with a powerful black horse harnessed to it. At the head of the cart was placed the coffin. On the right were several mounted grenadiers; on the left some half-dozen javelin-men. Soldiers were stationed at different points of the street to keep off the mob, and others were riding backwards

and forwards to maintain an open space for the passage of the procession.

The assemblage which was gathered together was almost countless. Every house-top, every window, every wall, every projection, had its occupants. The wall of Saint Sepulchre's Church was covered—so was the tower. The concourse extended along Giltspur Street as far as Smithfield. No one was allowed to pass along Newgate Street, which was barricaded and protected by a strong constabulary force.

The first person who issued from the Lodge was Mr. Marvel, who proceeded to the cart, and took his seat upon the coffin. The hangman is always an object of peculiar detestation to the mob; a tremendous hooting hailed his appearance, and both staves and swords were required to preserve order.

A deep silence, however, now prevailed, broken only by the tolling of the bells of Newgate and Saint Sepulchre's. The mighty concourse became for a moment still. Suddenly, such a shout as has seldom smitten human ears rent the air. "He comes!" cried a thousand voices, and the shout ascended to Smithfield, descended to Snow Hill, and told those who were assembled on Holborn Hill that Sheppard had left the prison.

Between the two officers with their arms linked in his, Jack Sheppard was conducted to the cart. He looked around, and as he heard that deafening shout—as he felt the influence of those thousand eyes fixed upon him—as he listened to the cheers, all his misgivings—if he had any—vanished, and he felt more as if he were marching to a triumph than proceeding to a shameful death.

Jack had no sooner taken his place in the cart, than he was followed by the ordinary, who seated himself beside him, and, opening the book of prayer, began to read aloud. Excited by the scene, Jack, however, could pay little attention to the good man's discourse, and was lost in a whirl of tumultuous emotions.

The cavalcade was now put slowly in motion. The horse-soldiers wheeled round and cleared a path ; the foot closed in upon the cart. Then came the javelin-men, walking four abreast ; and lastly, a long line of constables, marching in the same order.

The procession had just got into line of march, when a dreadful groan, mixed with yells, hootings, and execrations, was heard. This was occasioned by Jonathan Wild, who was seen to mount his horse and join the train. Jonathan, however, paid no sort of attention to this demonstration of hatred. He had buckled on his hanger, and had two brace of pistols in his belt, as well as others in his holsters.

By this time, the procession had reached the west end of the wall of Saint Sepulchre's Church, where, in compliance with an old custom, it halted. By the will of Mr. Robert Dow, merchant tailor, it was appointed that the sexton of Saint Sepulchre's should pronounce a solemn exhortation upon every criminal on his way to Tyburn, for which office he was to receive a small stipend. As soon as the cavalcade stopped, the sexton advanced, and ringing a handbell, pronounced the following admonition :—

“ All good people, pray heartily unto God for this poor sinner, who is now going to take his death, for whom this great bell doth toll.

“ You who are condemned to die, repent with lamentable tears. Ask mercy of the Lord for the salvation of your own soul, through the merits of the death and passion of Jesus Christ, who now sits at the right hand of God, to make intercession for you, if you penitently return to Him. The Lord have mercy upon you ! ”

This ceremony concluded, the cavalcade was again put in motion. Slowly descending Snow Hill, the train passed on its way, attended by the same stun-

ning vociferations, cheers, yells, and outcries, which had accompanied it on starting from Newgate. The guards had great difficulty in preserving a clear passage without resorting to severe measures, for the tide, which poured upon them behind, around, in front, and at all sides, was almost irresistible.

The houses on Snow Hill were thronged, like those in the Old Bailey. Every window, from the ground-floor to the garret, had its occupant, and the roofs were covered with spectators. Words of encouragement and sympathy were addressed to Jack, who, as he looked around, beheld many a friendly glance fixed upon him.

In this way they reached Holborn Bridge. Here a little delay occurred. The passage was so narrow that there was only sufficient room for the cart to pass, with a single line of foot-soldiers on one side; and, as the walls of the bridge were covered with spectators, it was not deemed prudent to cross it till these persons were dislodged.

While this was effected, intelligence was brought that a formidable mob was pouring down Field Lane, the end of which was barricaded. The advanced guard rode on to drive away any opposition, while the main body of the procession crossed the bridge, and slowly toiled up Holborn Hill.

The entrance of Shoe Lane, and the whole line of the wall of Saint Andrew's Church, the bell of which was tolling, was covered with spectators. Upon the steps leading to the gates of the church stood two persons whom Jack instantly recognised. These were his mistresses, Poll Maggot and Edgeworth Bess. As soon as the latter beheld him, she uttered a loud scream, and fainted. She was caught by some of the bystanders, who offered her every assistance in their power. As to Mrs. Maggot, whose nerves were more firmly strung, she contented herself with waving her

hand affectionately to her lover, and encouraging him by her gestures.

While this was taking place, another and more serious interruption occurred. The advanced guard had endeavoured to disperse the mob in Field Lane, but were not prepared to meet with the resistance they encountered.

The pavement had been hastily picked up, and heaped across the end of the street, upon which planks, barrels, and other barricades, were laid. Most of the mob were armed with pikes, staves, swords, muskets, and other weapons, and offered a most desperate resistance to the soldiery, whom they drove back with a shower of paving-stones.

The arrival of the cart at the end of Field Lane appeared the signal for an attempt at rescue. With a loud shout, and headed by a powerfully built man, with a face as black as that of a mulatto, and armed with a cutlass, the rabble leaped over the barricades, and rushed towards the vehicle.

An immediate halt took place. The soldiers surrounded the cart, drew their swords, and by striking the rioters first with the blunt edge of their blades, and afterwards with the sharp points, succeeded in driving them back.

Amid this skirmish Jonathan greatly distinguished himself. Drawing his hanger, he rode amongst the crowd, trampled upon those most in advance, and made an attempt to seize their leader, in whom he recognised Blueskin.

Baffled in their attempt, the mob uttered a roar, such as only a thousand angry voices can utter, and discharged a volley of missiles at the soldiery. Stones and brickbats were showered on all sides, and Mr. Marvel was almost dislodged from his seat on the coffin by a dead dog, which was hurled against him, and struck him in the face.

At length, however, by dealing blows right and left with their swords, and even inflicting severe cuts on the foremost of the rabble, the soldiers managed to gain a clear course, and to drive back the assailants, who, as they retreated behind the barricades, shouted, in tones of defiance, "To Tyburn! to Tyburn!"

The object of all this tumult, meanwhile, never altered his position, but sat back in the cart, as if resolved not to make even a struggle to regain his liberty. The procession now wound its way, without further interruption, along Holborn. Like a river swollen by many currents, it gathered force from the various avenues that poured their streams into it. Fetter Lane on the left, Gray's Inn on the right, added their supplies. On all hands Jack was cheered, and Jonathan hooted.

At length, the train approached Saint Giles's. Here, according to another old custom, already alluded to, a criminal taken to execution was allowed to halt at a tavern, called the Crown, and take a draught from Saint Giles's bowl, "as his last refreshment on earth."

At the door of this tavern, which was situated on the left of the street, not more than a hundred yards distant from the church, the bell of which began to toll as soon as the procession came in sight, the cart drew up, and the whole cavalcade halted.

A wooden balcony in one of the adjoining houses was thronged with ladies, all of whom appeared to take a lively interest in the scene, and to be full of commiseration for the criminal, not perhaps unmixed with admiration of his appearance. Every window in the public-house was filled with guests; and, as in the case of Saint Andrew's, the churchyard wall of Saint Giles's was lined with spectators.

A scene now ensued, highly characteristic of the age and the occasion. The doleful procession at once assumed a festive character. Many of the soldiers

dismounted, and called for drink. Their example was immediately imitated by the officers, constables, javelin-men, and other attendants; and nothing was to be heard but shouts of laughter and jesting—nothing seen but the passing of glasses, and the emptying of foaming jugs. Mr. Marvel, who had been a little discomposed by the treatment he had experienced on Holborn Hill, very composedly filled and lighted his pipe.

One group at the door attracted Jack's attention, inasmuch as it was composed of several of his old acquaintances—Mr. Kneebone, Van Galgebok, and Baptist Kettleby—all of whom greeted him cordially. Besides these there was a sturdy looking fellow, whom he instantly recognised as the honest blacksmith who had freed him from his irons at Tottenham.

"I'm here, you see," said the smith.

"So I perceive," replied Jack.

At this moment, the landlord of the Crown, a jovial-looking, stout personage, with a white apron around his waist, issued from the house, bearing a large wooden bowl filled with ale, which he offered to Jack, who instantly rose to receive it. Raising the bowl in his right hand, Jack glanced towards the balcony, in which the group of ladies were seated, and begged to drink their healths; he then turned to Kneebone and the others, who extended their hands towards him, and raised it to his lips. Just as he was about to drain it, he encountered the basilisk glance of Jonathan Wild, and paused.

"I leave this bowl for you," he cried, returning it to the landlord, untasted.

"Your father said so before you," replied Jonathan malignantly; "and yet it has tarried thus long."

"You will call for it before six months are passed," rejoined Jack sternly.

Once again the cavalcade was in motion, and wending its way by Saint Giles's Church, the bell of which con-

tinued tolling all the time, passed the pound, and entered Oxford Road, or, as it was then not unfrequently termed, Tyburn Road. After passing Tottenham Court Road, very few houses were to be seen on the right hand, and opposite Wardour Street it was open country.

The crowd now dispersed amongst the fields, and thousands of persons were seen hurrying towards Tyburn as fast as their legs could carry them, leaping over hedges, and breaking down every impediment in their course. Besides those who conducted themselves more peaceably, the conductors of the procession noticed, with considerable uneasiness, large bands of men armed with staves, bludgeons, and other weapons, who were flying across the field in the same direction.

As it was feared that some mischief would ensue, Wild volunteered, if he were allowed a small body of men, to ride forward to Tyburn, and keep the ground clear until the arrival of the prisoner. This suggestion being approved, was instantly acted upon, and the thief-taker, accompanied by a body of the grenadiers, rode forward.

The train, meantime, had passed Marylebone Lane, when it again paused for a moment, at Jack's request, near the door of a public-house called the City of Oxford. Scarcely had it come to a halt, when a stalwart man shouldered his way, in spite of their opposition, through the lines of soldiery, to the cart, and offered his large horny hand to the prisoner.

"I told you I would call to bid you farewell, Mr. Figg," said Jack.

"So you did," said the prize-fighter. "Sorry you're obliged to keep your word. Heard of your last escape. Hoped you'd not be retaken. Never sent for the shirt."

"I didn't want it," replied Jack; "but who are those gentlemen?"

"Friends of yours," replied Figg; "come to see

you—Sir James Thornhill, Mr. Hogarth, and Mr. Gay. They send you every good wish.”

“Offer them my hearty thanks,” replied Jack, waving his hand to the group, all of whom returned the salutation. “And now, farewell, Mr. Figg! In a few minutes all will be over.”

Figg turned aside to hide the tears that started to his eyes—for the stout prize-fighter, with a man’s courage, had a woman’s heart—and the procession again set forward.

XXXII

The Closing Scene.

TYBURN was now at hand. Over the sea of heads arose a black and dismal object. It was the gallows. Jack, whose back was towards it, did not see it; but he heard, from the pitying exclamations of the crowd, that it was in view. This circumstance produced no further alteration in his demeanour, except that he endeavoured to abstract himself from the surrounding scene, and bend his attention to the prayers which the ordinary was reciting.

Just as he had succeeded in fixing his attention, it was again shaken, and he was almost unnerved by the sight of Mr. Wood, who was standing at the edge of a raised platform, anxiously waving his hand to him.

Jack instantly sprung to his feet, and as his guards construed the motion into an attempt to escape, several of them drew their swords, and motioned to him to sit down. But Jack did not heed them. His looks were fixed on his old benefactor.

“God in heaven bless you, unhappy boy!” cried Wood, bursting into tears; “God bless you!”

Jack extended his hands towards him, and looked

anxiously for Thames ; but he was nowhere to be seen. A severe pang shot through Jack's heart, and he would have given worlds, if he possessed them, to have seen his friend once more. The wish was vain ; and, endeavouring to banish every earthly thought, he addressed himself deeply and sincerely to prayer.

While this was passing, Jonathan had ridden back to Marvel, to tell him that all was ready, and to give him his last instructions.

"You'll lose no time," said the thief-taker. "A hundred pounds if you do it quickly."

"Rely on me," rejoined the executioner, throwing away his pipe, which was just finished.

A deep dread calm, like that which precedes a thunderstorm, now prevailed amongst the assemblage. The thousand voices which a few moments before had been so clamorous were now hushed. Not a breath was drawn. The troops had kept a large space clear around the gallows. The galleries adjoining it were crowded with spectators—so was the roof of a large tavern, then the only house standing at the end of the Edgware Road—so were the trees—the walls of Hyde Park—a neighbouring barn, a shed—in short, every available position.

The cart, meantime, had approached the fatal tree. The guards, horse and foot, and constables, formed a wide circle round it to keep off the mob. It was an awful moment—so awful, that every other feeling except deep interest in the scene seemed suspended.

At this terrible juncture, Jack maintained his composure—a smile played upon his face before the cap was drawn over it—and the last words he uttered were, "My poor mother ! I shall soon join her !" The rope was then adjusted, and the cart began to move.

The next instant he was launched into eternity !

Scarcely had he been turned off a moment, when a

man with swarthy features leaped into the cart with an open clasp-knife in his hand, and, before he could be prevented, severed the rope and cut down the body. It was Blueskin. His assistance came too late. A ball from Wild's pistol passed through his heart, and a volley of musketry poured from the guards, and lodged several balls in the yet breathing body of his leader.

Blueskin, however, was not unattended. A thousand eager assistants pressed behind him. Jack's body was caught, and passed from hand to hand over a thousand heads, till it was far from the fatal tree.

The shouts of indignation—the frightful yells now raised, baffle description. A furious attack was made on Jonathan, who, though he defended himself like a lion, was desperately wounded, and would inevitably have perished if he had not been protected by the guards, who were obliged to use both swords and fire-arms upon the mob in his defence.

He was at length rescued from his assailants—rescued to perish, seven months afterwards, with every ignominy, at the very gibbet to which he had brought his victim.

The body of Jack Sheppard, meanwhile, was borne along by that tremendous host, which rose and fell like the waves of the ocean, until it approached the termination of the Edgeware Road.

At this point a carriage, with servants in sumptuous liveries, was stationed. At the open door stood a young man in a rich garb with a mask on his face, who was encouraging the mob by words and gestures. At length the body was brought towards him. Instantly seizing it, the young man placed it in the carriage, shut the door, and commanded his servants to drive off. The order was promptly obeyed, and the horses proceeded at a furious pace along the Edgeware Road.

Half-an-hour afterwards the body of Jack was carefully examined. It had been cut down before life was

extinct, but a ball from one of the soldiers had pierced his heart.

Thus died Jack Sheppard.

That night a grave was dug in Willesden Churchyard next to that in which Mrs. Sheppard had been interred. Two persons, besides the clergyman and sexton, alone attended the ceremony. They were a young man and an old one, and both appeared deeply affected. The coffin was lowered into the grave, and the mourners departed. A simple wooden monument was placed over the grave, but without any name or date. In after years, some pitying hand supplied the inscription, which ran thus—





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